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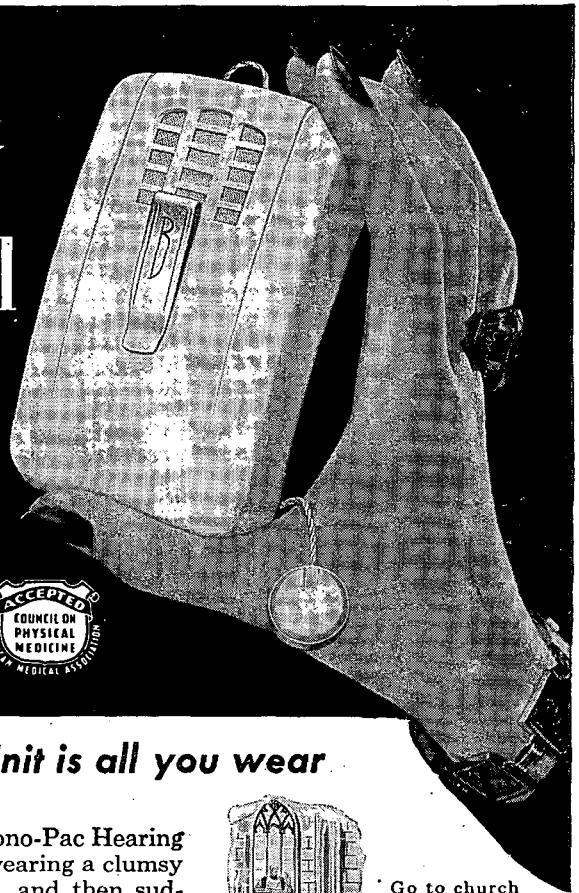

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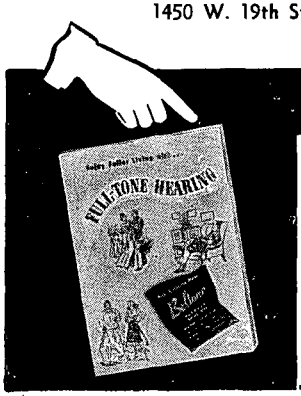

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STEADY, JEB!

JUMP, BABS!

THE FEAR-CRAZED ANIMAL SNAPS A REIN AND GALLOPS BLINDLY AT THE FENCE

WHOA, BOY! IT'S ALL OVER

WHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, BABS?

YES, THANKS TO MISTER . . .

TOM ADAM'S MY NAME. JUST DRIVING THROUGH

LUNCH? YOU'RE VERY KIND, BUT I'M HARDLY PRESENTABLE. BEEN DRIVING SINCE MIDNIGHT AND . . .

YOU CAN CLEAN UP AT THE CLUB. COME ON

AND HERE'S MY RAZOR

THIS BLADE'S A SWEETHEART! MY FACE FEELS GREAT!

TOUGH WHISKERS ARE NO PROBLEM FOR THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN

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HE'S CERTAINLY HANDSOME

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VOL. 9 FEBRUARY, 1948 No. 3

Book-Length Novel

The Peacemaker — **C. S. Forester** — 6

Unwittingly, he held the key to the world's future at his fingertips, and dared for the sake of unborn generations to become the master of the world for a day!

Novelette

Planet of Sand — **Murray Leinster** — 90

Tossed into the trackless Cosmos by his mortal enemy, shipwrecked on an unfriendly star, he determined to defy the dangers of numberless nights, and, hunted turned hunter, keep a tryst with Hate. . . .

Short Story

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Some ghastly presence lurked in that Cimmerian darkness, waiting to pounce . . . but the grown-up world remained deaf to all warnings—until. . .

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THE PEACEMAKER

By C. S. Forester

CHAPTER I

DOCTOR EDWARD PETHWICK, mathematics and physics master at the Liverpool School, was sitting at a window in his room adjoining the senior physics laboratory. He had laid aside the calculation on which he was engaged, in order to watch the proceedings in the playing fields beneath the window.

The Officers' Training Corps was coming on parade in readiness for a rehearsal of tomorrow's review by a general from the War Office. Today they were being reviewed merely by a general who did not use the title—Mr. Henry Laxton, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.A., Headmaster of the Liverpool School, who had risen during the war from the rank of captain in the Territorial Army to the command of a brigade, and when the war was over had returned to the teaching profession and had accepted this headmastership. It gave the school a decided prestige to have at its head a brigadier-general, because even though he punctiliously never used the title everyone who mattered knew that it was his by right.

At the moment his son, Henry Laxton the Second, Captain of the School and Sergeant of No. 3 Platoon, was bringing his detachment on to the parade-ground.

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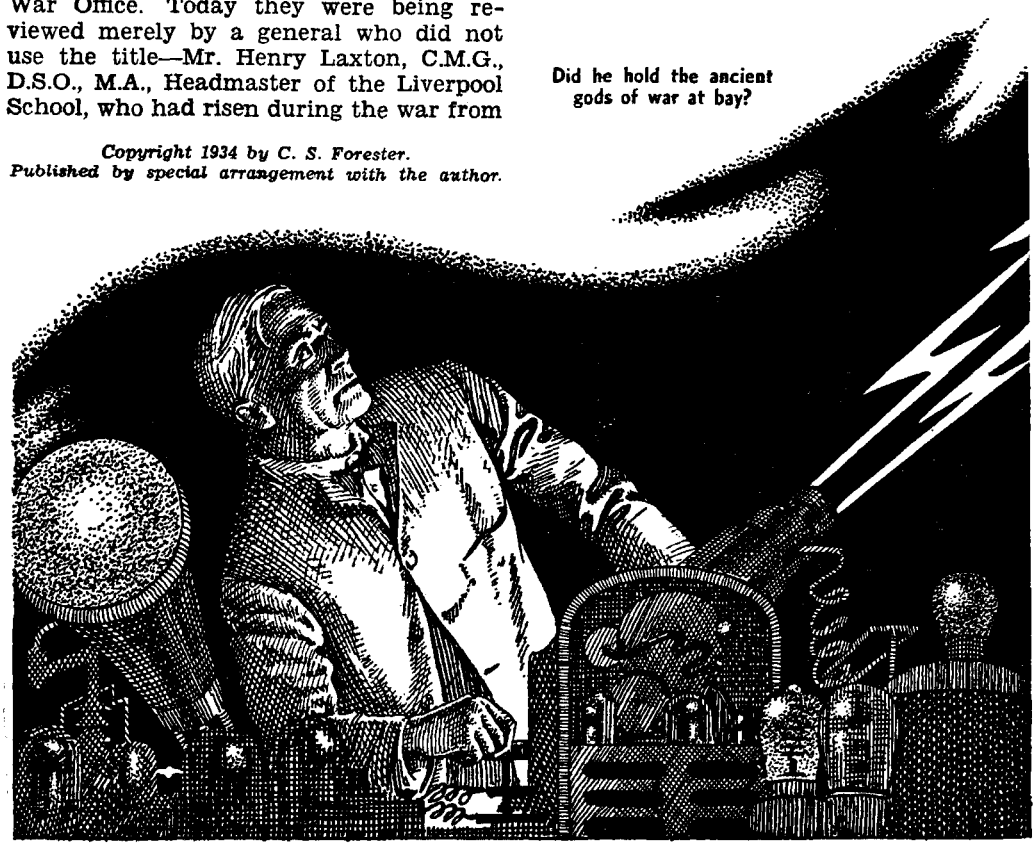

Did he hold the ancient gods of war at bay?

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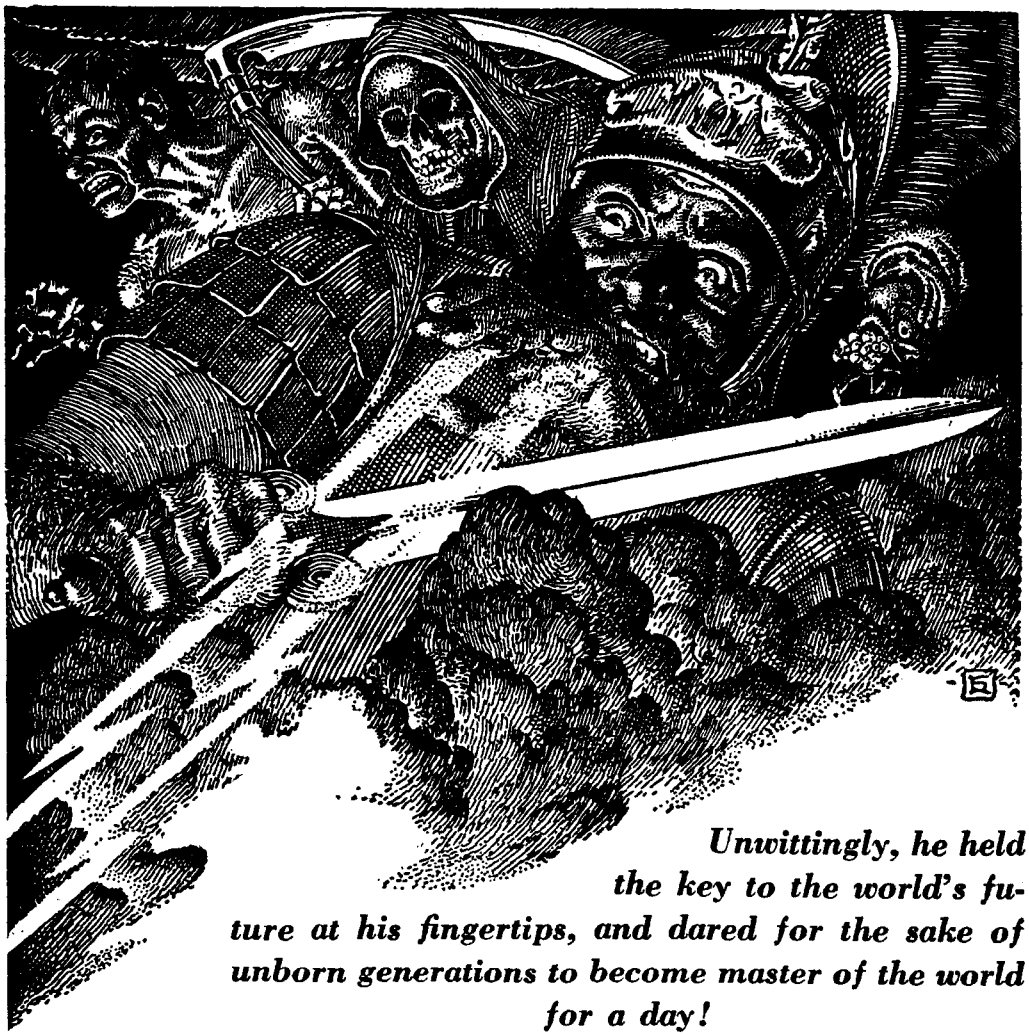

Unwittingly, he held the key to the world's future at his fingertips, and dared for the sake of unborn generations to become master of the world for a day!

He walked with a swagger which was an improvement on that of the regular sergeant-major's; he handled his silver-topped cane to the manner born; and the long bayonet which swung on his hip rhythmically with his stride was the finishing touch to his soldierly appearance.

Pethwick saw his dark eyes beneath his cap peak gauging carefully, but without hurry, the distance between the head of his column and the space where No. 3 platoon should be. Then young Laxton shouted the order—although "shout" is too barbaric a word for that beautifully modulated word of command.

"At the *halt*, on the *left* form—*platoon*."

No. 3 platoon came up into line exactly where it ought to have been, and stood rigid.

"Order—*hype*. Standa—*tease*."

The fifty rifles came down like one; the fifty left feet made only one sound as they were pushed out.

Pethwick, watching from the window, knew he could never have done anything like that. His voice would have risen to a squeak with excitement. He would have misjudged the distance hopelessly, so that the little devils at the head of the platoon would have bumped delightedly into the line ahead of them. He could not conceive of himself ever having fifty boys under such perfect control as to order arms and stand at ease without a fidget or a wriggle anywhere along the line.

Pethwick was conscious of a vague envy of young Laxton. He envied him the calm self-confidence of his carriage, his coolness,

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and his efficiency in action. He ranked young Laxton in his mind with all the people whom he described to himself—drawing upon a vague memory of Fiona Macleod's *Immortal Hour*—as "the Lordly Ones," people who could do things in front of other people without fumbling at their neckties.

Pethwick tried to comfort himself by thinking of things which he could do with ease and which were quite beyond young Laxton's capacity; only that very morning in class Laxton had come down badly in attempting to demonstrate Cayley's proof of the Binomial Theorem, which to Pethwick was literally no more abstruse than the addition of two and two. But there was somehow no comfort in the memory, for Pethwick was of such an unfortunate mental composition as to find no pleasure in the malicious contemplation of other people's difficulties.

Down on the parade-ground the regular sergeant-major and young Laxton had posted the markers—this was a very formal parade indeed.

"Markers, *steady*."

The drums rolled as the lines dressed. The officers were on parade now, Pethwick's colleagues all of them, Summers with his medals, Malpas and Stowe trim in their new uniforms, Hicks still tugging at his gloves—he, too, was not of the Lordly Ones. Swords were drawn and glittered in the sun. It was rare indeed for swords to be seen in the playing fields of the Liverpool School. The khaki ranks stood fast, motionless. The very atmosphere seemed charged with a tension which told that the great moment of the day was at hand.

Then the doors of the school hall towards which the parade was facing flew open, and the headmaster stepped out. Summers bawled an order. The band played a lively march—making a horrible hash of the opening bars—and the swords flashed as they came to the salute, and the rifles came to the present as though actuated by one single vast machine.

Mr. Laxton's appearance fully justified all this ceremony. He was not in uniform—after all, this was only a rehearsal of tomorrow's review—but by a happy thought he was wearing morning clothes, superb in cut and style, setting just the right note of informal formality. He stood with his yellow gloves and silver-mounted stick in one hand and his silk hat raised in the other during the general salute, and then he came forward, while Summers hastened to meet him, to walk along the lines in formal inspection.

Dr. Pethwick continued to watch and suffer. He knew that if he were to put on a morning coat he would look like a seedy shop-walker.

And then Dr. Pethwick's heart gave a little kick inside his ribs. Mr. Laxton was now standing at the flagstaff which marked the saluting-point, and by his side was a young woman in a brown summer frock, talking animatedly. It was his daughter Dorothy, whom Dr. Pethwick considered to be the sweetest, most beautiful, most lovely of all the Lordly Ones.

Even leaving out of account the fact that Dr. Pethwick was a married man, it is remarkable that he had come to differentiate between Lordly Ones to such an extent that the sight of one particular one of them a hundred yards away should send up his pulse-rate, while none of the others affected him in any such manner. Yet if Dr. Pethwick had been able to put his feelings into words, he would have said that Dorothy Laxton was a fountain of sweetness, and that within the circle of Dorothy Laxton's arms (although he had no personal experience) lay all the bliss and rest and happiness of any conceivable paradise. Even looking at her over the playing-fields brought a pain into his breast—a pain in which he found an odd pleasure.

Pethwick gulped and looked away, allowing his mind, for the first time for a quarter of an hour, to revert to the calculation which half covered the large sheet of paper before him. The expression he was dealing with there included half the Greek alphabet and half the English, as well as eight or nine other symbols which only come to light in mathematical textbooks. Even Dr. Pethwick had found himself floundering a little helplessly at the moment when young Laxton had marched up No. 3 platoon to distract him.

WHEN the *Encyclopedia Britannica* writes its little biographies of mathematicians and similar odd people, it is generous enough in its praise of their achievements. Sometimes, indeed, it even condescends to some small detail of their private lives, saying, perhaps, "for the next twenty years he was happily occupied as Professor of Mathematics at So-and-So University," and sometimes even, it goes so far as to give a vague hint of "domestic trouble," or illness." But from those poor data it is hard to conjure up a complete picture of the life of such a man as Peth-

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wick, of the troubles and distractions caused him by such things as far unconnected with mathematics as his strong views upon disarmament and the facts that he loved his headmaster's daughter, and that a silk hat did not suit his looks, and that his wife was a slovenly and malicious drunkard, or even that the Officers' Training Corps should choose to hold a rehearsal of a review under the windows of his room, in the afternoon following a morning when Vb had been badly behaved and the Upper Sixth had been worse.

Perhaps all these dissimilar ingredients contributed to the sigh with which Pethwick picked up his pen again in his long, beautiful fingers and addressed himself to the tangle of neat symbols while, outside, the band blared and the Officers' Training Corps plunged into the complicated wheel which was to get them into position for the march past.

It is conceivable that the distraction did Pethwick good, that the few minutes during which his mind had been empty of his work gave it an opportunity to rally for the last final effort. But it is just as likely that the stimulus given to his circulation and reactions by the distant sight of Dorothy Laxton may have been responsible. However it was, Pethwick's pen moved across the paper without hesitation for some minutes. Line was added to line of the calculation. Two nasty corners were turned by ingenious devices. The expression simplified itself.

Pethwick's eyebrows rose at one discovery; it was all very surprising. If he had been able to carry the calculation in his head he might have deduced all this weeks ago, and he was rather annoyed with himself for not having done so—he told himself that Gauss or Clerk Maxwell would have achieved the feat easily; in that he was wrong, betrayed into error by his habitual poor opinion of his own capacity.

The mathematical expression had been reduced now to the simplest form such a thing could possibly attain, and Pethwick looked at it with surprise. This was not what he had started to prove. He had set out to find a zero, and here was definite evidence that there was not a zero to be found; that when all allowances had been made there was a substantial residuum left over.

That was how Pethwick regarded it; actually he deserved a good deal more credit. Before he had set about this calculation the flair, the inspiration, which denotes the great scientist had told him that there might perhaps be this residuum despite the general consensus of mathematical opinion. The notion had bothered him until he had determined to settle it once and for all. Now he had proved himself right, proved that the two minor factors to which a whole series of keen minds had refused to attach importance were important after all, and he had already formed an erroneous estimate of his own achievement. He told himself that he had believed he would reach a zero and had reached a positive result instead, whereas actually in his heart of hearts he had known all along that he would reach that result. But Pethwick could never give himself credit for anything.

All the same, it was equally characteristic of him that he did not look back through his calculation to check its correctness. He knew that was all right. The only doubtful point was whether Klein's original figures, with Norbury's elaborations of them, were accurate.

Pethwick looked again at Norbury's eloquent paragraphs in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society which had originally inspired his investigation. Klein was probably accurate, and Norbury was certainly right as far as he had gone —which was not very far. At that rate the result which Pethwick had reached was exceedingly interesting mathematically. The experimental investigation which should follow would also be interesting. Pethwick was not very excited at the thought of that. He was much more of a mathematician than a physicist, and his lack of self-assurance made him continually doubtful of his manipulative skill.

But something might easily come of his discovery. There might be some application in the arts, in several directions. Electrical generation might be simplified, or for that matter broadcasting, or motor-car ignition. Because Pethwick had spent three weeks wrestling with figures housewives all over the world might find their electric irons cheaper to run, or little clerks might come home from their offices to listen in with more efficient radio sets, or ten million motorists in ten million garages would have to give one fewer turn to the cranks of their motor-cars on cold mornings.

Pethwick smiled with one side of his mouth at the exuberance of his imagination. There was an enormous distance between a row of figures on a sheet of paper and the general adoption of an invention which might possibly spring from bench

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experiments which might perhaps follow from those figures. But still, such was the stimulus given to his mind by this extravagant imagination of his that he resolved to carry out the very next day a few simple practical confirmations of his theoretical deductions. As he put his papers away in his desk he was already listing in his mind pieces of apparatus which he would need for preliminary work, and which the resources of the senior physics laboratory at the Liverpool School could provide.

AS DR. EDWARD PETHWICK came out of the Science Buildings of the school into the courtyard (Mr. Laxton discountenanced the use of the word "playground," which had generally been employed before his accession) he encountered his headmaster and his headmaster's daughter coming away from the saluting point now that the review was over.

Dr. Pethwick lifted off his hat and passed on. Mr. Laxton nodded with a condescension which was made all the more remarkable by his morning coat and silk hat. Dorothy smiled very charmingly indeed. And as Dr. Pethwick went on, conscious of the fact that his coat crumpled below its collar, and that his soft hat was shabby, and his shoes unclean, Mr. Laxton cocked his head sideways after him and said:

"Queer bloke, that."

Mr. Laxton was of the type that cannot help making a comment about anyone he happened to encounter.

"Doctor Pethwick? I like him."

"Oh, he's all right, I suppose, in his way. But you have to be a damn' good disciplinarian before you can dress like that in a boys' school, you know, Dorothy. And he's not."

"I shouldn't think he was," said Dorothy.

Dorothy, as a matter of fact, was always reminded by Dr. Pethwick's appearance of the White Knight in *Through the Looking-Glass*—perhaps the most lovable character in English fiction, but hardly of the type to keep order in a secondary school.

"Honestly, Dorothy, I ought to get rid of him," said Mr. Laxton. "He can't keep discipline, and he can't teach, and he's no good at games, and his wife—"

"Don't let's talk about his wife," said Dorothy. She had heard too much about Mrs. Pethwick; wherever two or three women were gathered together in that suburb there was always some discussion of Mrs. Pethwick.

"But then, I don't know," said Mr. Laxton. "I thought about it when I first came here, and decided against sacking him then, and the same arguments hold good now, I suppose. He's an old boy of the school, you know, and although he *is* a London man, he's the only one left on the staff, thank God. Did I tell you the new man who's coming next term is Winchester and New?"

"Yes, Father," said Dorothy. She thought of adding, but refrained, "Several times."

"Oh, yes, so I did. What were we talking about before that? Oh, Pethwick. I didn't tell you that that astronomer chap on the board of governors—what's his name?—Runciman, that's it—was talking to me about a couple of papers of Pethwick's in some mathematical journal or other. Marvellous stuff, Runciman was saying."

"Really?" said Dorothy, with a trace of interest. "What were they about?"

"Don't ask me, girl. It's not my line, as you know jolly well. But Runciman obviously thought the world of him—'A very brilliant young mathematician, evidently,' and all that sort of thing."

"Young?" questioned Dorothy, who was twenty-three.

"God bless my soul, yes," said Mr. Laxton. "He's not much older than you are. I see his name on the honours board every time I take prayers in hall. He got his degree—B.Sc.—in 1921, and I know he was nineteen at the time. He's thirty-one. Got his doctorate at twenty-four. Runciman was talking to me about his thesis at the same time as the other things."

Dorothy remembered guiltily that only last week she had decided that she would marry someone just over thirty, as that was the most suitable age. It was a shock to her to realize that Dr. Pethwick was that age, although she had never pictured herself married to him.

"I hope," mused Mr. Laxton, "that he does something really brilliant soon. Suppose he became as famous as Einstein. Think what a lot of good that would do to the school."

Mr. Laxton had ambitions regarding the school. He wished to raise it to pre-eminence among secondary schools—nay more, he had visions of making a public school of it, and himself attaining the lofty distinction of admission to the Public School Headmasters' Conference. In the last three years he had done much towards it; he had weeded out all the members of the staff—save for Dr. Pethwick—who did not hold degrees from Oxford or Cambridge; there was even a half-blue on the

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staff. He had introduced the practice of corporal punishment and the teaching of Greek—although his board of governors had so far managed to prevent him from making Greek a compulsory subject for the tradesmen's sons and small clerks' sons who were his pupils.

Mr. Laxton's chief trouble was the name of the school. Everyone who was not initiated thought that the Liverpool school must be in Liverpool, a mere provincial place, instead of, as was actually the case, owing its name to its Victorian founder and being in a suburb of London as near to the heart of things as St. Paul's and Dulwich College and Merchant Taylors', which everyone knew to be real public schools. Even the Old Boys would not help him much. They insisted on calling themselves Old Liverpudlians—a disgustingly provincial name—and remained stone-deaf to hints from the headmaster that he would welcome any movement to change the name into something more airy and gentlemanly.

In Mr. Laxton's mind the retention of Dr. Pethwick on the staff was a noble gesture, a magnificent recognition of the rise of democracy, a most notable example of the fact that nowadays a career was always open to talent. For Dr. Pethwick had no education beyond the Liverpool School and the University of London. Everyone knew that he was only the son of a local saddler—dead now, thank God—and that he had all sorts of queer cousins and relations still living in the district who were only working-class people. And also that he had a terrible wife—of the same class, of course.

AT THAT very moment Dr. Pethwick was hoping, as he put his key into his front door, that his wife was not going to be "difficult" this evening. And as he came into the front hall he knew that she was. She came out of the dining room with that heaviness and exaggeration of gait which foretold the worst.

"Hullo!" said Mary Pethwick. Then she put out her hand against the wall and rested against it in a negligent sort of way. Her demeanour indicated that there was no real need for this support; she did it from choice, not to keep her balance.

"Hullo, dear," said Pethwick, hanging up his hat.

"Your tea's not ready," said Mary, as though it were his fault.

"Well, it doesn't matter," replied Pethwick. "I'll get it myself."

He edged past her along the hall into the little kitchen; she made no effort to get out of his way but stood watching every step he took. The little kitchen was full of squalor. On the gas stove stood the frying pan in which had been cooked the breakfast bacon. The sink and the small table beside it were covered with dirty saucepans and dishes.

Pethwick looked round for the kettle, found it in the littered pantry, filled it and set it on the stove. Then he heard Mary's blundering step down the hall, and she came in after him; the door, pushed open a shade too violently, crashed against the wall.

Mary put her back against the wall beside the dresser and watched his movements jealously. In that tiny room, littered as it was, there was hardly room for Pethwick to move now. Pethwick sighed; he was experienced now in Mary's "difficultness." When she followed him about like this it meant that she was looking for an opportunity to grumble. The only shadow of comfort left was that as the grumbling was quite inevitable it did not matter what he did.

He cleared the little table by stacking the dirty things neatly in the sink—until that was done there was nowhere where anything could be set down for a second. He washed out the teapot. He found, miraculously, a clean cup and saucer and plate. There were fragments of a broken jug under the sink. The only other two jugs in the house were dirty and greasy; he would have to pour his milk direct from the bottle—there was, fortunately, a little left. There was a smear of butter on the breadboard. The half loaf had stood since morning in the sunshine coming through the kitchen window; its cut surface was hard and dry.

An incautious movement on Pethwick's part set his foot on the saucer of milk put down for the cat beside the stove. It broke under his heel, and the milk streamed across the dirty floor.

"There!" said Mary. "Look what you've done! All over my nice clean kitchen!"

"I'm sorry, dear," said Pethwick. "I'll mop it up."

He picked up a dishcloth from beside the sink and stooped over the mess.

"That's a teacloth," screamed Mary. "Don't use a teacloth for that!"

Pethwick put it back where he found it; the colour of the thing made the mistake excusable. He found something else, mopped up the mess, put the cloth back,

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and began cutting himself bread and butter.

"Look how you're wasting the gas!" said Mary.

The kettle was boiling. Mary often left kettles boiling until the bottom was burnt out of them, and she did not mind in the least how much gas was used, but she had to find something to harass her husband with. Pethwick made his tea, and went on cutting bread and butter.

"That's all the bread there is," said Mary, again as if it were his fault. Pethwick checked himself in the act of cutting. Half a small loaf is not much if it has to constitute a man's evening meal and two persons' breakfast. Incautiously he allowed himself to say something which might be construed as displaying a little annoyance.

"Didn't the baker come today?" he asked.

"It's not my fault if he comes when I'm out," said Mary, leaping into the long sought opening. "Fancy saying that to me! Do you expect—"

There is no need to give a verbatim account of what Mary Pethwick went on saying. The fact that Pethwick had dared to hint that she had neglected her domestic duties was a splendid starting point, from which she could counter-attack in righteous indignation. With malice she poisoned her barbed words. She knew, with the ingenuity of evil, how to wound. She jeered at his proverbial inability to keep a class in order, at his untidy appearance, at all the weaknesses of which he was conscious and for which he was ashamed.

Some husbands, sitting silent, could have let her words pass unheeded, practically unheard, but that was impossible to Pethwick. He was far too sensitive a man. He listened, and every word hurt. The stale bread and butter he was trying to eat at the kitchen table turned in his mouth to something more like sawdust than ever. The bitter strong tea to which he had looked forward was too bitter to drink. He pushed his cup away and rose from the table, to be censured again, of course, for the sin of waste. Mary had no objection to making use of the most ridiculous charges against him. They gave her time to think of more wounding things without having to check her speech.

Only one thing ever caused her to pause. It came now, while Pethwick stood waiting for the kettle to boil before beginning to wash up. Mary said suddenly that she could no longer bear the sight of him. It was a splendid excuse for moving away with dignity. Pethwick heard her go along the hall and into the dining-room, and he heard the sideboard door there open and close. He knew why. Then in a little while the kitchen door crashed open again and Mary came back to renew the onset, all the while that Pethwick was trying to wash clean the greasy dishes and saucepans.

WHEN the washing up was completed Pethwick went into the drawing-room and unpacked from his bag the thirty-one exercise books which contained the physics homework of Vb, but in the next two hours he only succeeded in marking two of them, and those were during the two intervals when Mary went into the dining-room to the sideboard cupboard. The other twenty-nine took him hardly more than an hour after Mary had gone up to bed, heavily and slowly, pulling herself up by the banisters.

And if it be asked why Pethwick endured treatment of this sort without revolt, the answer can only be found in his heredity and his environment. The saddler, his father, had been a thoughtful little wisp of a man; his mother had been a big masterful woman of generous figure, not at all unlike, in her young days, the woman Pethwick married—who was her niece, and, consequently, Pethwick's cousin. That big bullying mother of his had much to answer for. She won her little white-faced son's love and frightened him out of his life in turns.

The years of Edward Pethwick's adolescence were a lunatic time, when there was war, and air-raids, and his father's earnings amounted more than once to nearly a thousand pounds in the year. Mrs. Pethwick lived gloriously, never more than half-drunk but rarely less, and in time Mr. Pethwick came to follow her example. Other people bought pianos and fur coats; the Pethwicks made a more magnificent gesture still and sent their son to a secondary school instead of putting him to work at fourteen. They destined him to be the first member of their family on either side to earn his living by his brain instead of by his hands.

The result was that Edward Pethwick matriculated at sixteen before the war was over, and took his degree at nineteen very brilliantly indeed just before his parents quitted a world where a saddler's earnings had shrunk to an amount which would hardly suffice to make two people drunk even once a week.

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Where the mathematical talent came from in Pethwick's make-up it is hard to tell. That particular mental twist is strongly hereditary, but it is hard to find any other example of it either in Pethwick's father's family or in his mother's. But as none of them, as far as can be ascertained, ever stayed at school long enough for any talent of that sort to be discovered it is possible that it was present but latent among them.

Pethwick married at twenty. He would have had to have been a clever man to avoid that fate. For on the death of his parents his aunt had taken care of him, and within the year the combined efforts of the whole of his aunt's family were successful in their aim. It was a tremendous prize, for Pethwick was a member of a profession, a school-teacher, not merely several rungs higher up the social ladder than his wife's family, but he might be said to be on another ladder from theirs altogether.

His very salary at twenty was far larger than his father-in-law earned at fifty. If Mary had not married him she would have had to hope that the time would come when perhaps some shop assistant or lorry driver would in an unguarded moment give her the opportunity of snatching him out of bachelorhood.

As it was, Mary won a colossal prize—a house with three bedrooms in it and no lodgers at all (until she married Mary never lived in a house with less than two families); a husband with a job which more likely than not would continue safely for forty years (he was the only man she knew with a job of more than a week's permanency); more clothes than she could wear and more food than she could eat, where previously there had been no certainty of even a minimum of either. Shopkeepers would treat her with deference, where previously she had been accustomed to a state of society where the shop-keeper was a man of social distinction to whom customers deferred.

In eleven years Mary had grown used to it—eleven years of nothing much to do and no particular desire to do it. For that matter, in two months Mary had grown bored with her new house and her new furniture so that even her mother's generous envy was no longer sweet to her. There was a bottle of stout to drink at lunch time. Her mother liked gin but could so rarely afford it that it was nice to have some handy when she came.

And when she went to visit her family and in the evening went, as a matter of course, to the "King's Arms," it was nice, when her turn came, to say, "Won't you make it a short one this time?" and to have a Scotch herself, and to take out of her purse a couple of half-crowns to pay for all—more than her father could spend there in a week without going short on something else. It was not very long before Pethwick was quite used to coming home to a wife with something the matter with her temper.

IF ONLY Mary had found something to keep her occupied before the habit of solitary drinking took hold of her, she might have been a good wife. If children had come—lots of them—or if Pethwick had been a severe taskmaster, or if Mary had been ambitious as regards clothes, or social position, or food, or if, incredibly, she had developed a talent for art or literature, matters might have been different. But as it was she had plunged into idleness, she had found idleness unsatisfying, and she had come to dull her racing mind with drink. After all, it was excusable. The only people Mary knew considered a man fortunate to be drunk, and it took so little even now, to unbalance her that the habit was easily formed.

Nor was her husband any help to her He was far too queer a person. He could never see any attraction in drink—he had the complete distaste for it which occasionally characterizes the offspring of drunken parents—and he was a fool about his wife. She and his mother were the only women he had ever known, and he thought women were marvellous beings, and ten years of married life had no more widened his knowledge of them than ten years of mathematical research had done.

Pethwick put Vb's physics homework away in his bag, switched off the light, and went up to bed. The nightly routine of washing his hands and cleaning his teeth relieved his mind of much of the tension and distress the evening had brought him, and when he went into the bedroom Mary was, heaven be praised, already asleep, snoring a little, with her clothes strewn about the room. Pethwick put on his ragged pyjamas and climbed quietly in beside her. There were nights when Mary's visits to the dining-room sideboard only made her more and more wakeful and, consequently, quarrelsome, and these were nights of purgatory for Pethwick, but happily this was not one of them.

He could compose himself on the pillow

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and allow his current of thought, clear now, and unhurried, to flow through his mind. He thought about Officers' Training Corps, and Dorothy Laxton and Vb's bad behaviour and the chance of cramming Dawson through the intermediate B.Sc. this summer. And while that side of his brain was digesting these matters, the other side was developing the consequences of his mathematical discovery of that afternoon. It went steadily on regardless of his other thoughts, like a clock ticking in a drawing-room where a party is going on, attracting no attention but turning the hands unfalteringly.

Then it broke in upon his consciousness, staggeringly, as though the drawing-room clock were suddenly to strike with Big Ben's volume of sound. That mathematical expression at which his calculations had ended in the afternoon had transformed itself in his mind, had assumed a vital new guise, presenting itself with clarity as a stunning revelation. Pethwick's heart beat faster even than if he were thinking about Dorothy Laxton, and for once in his life he had no thought to spare for her. He was making his way from point to point of a new deduction in that highly rarefied atmosphere where mathematics tend to become not merely a measure of, but identical with, electro-magnetics and electro-kinetics.

He knew now that he was progressing towards not merely an interesting mathematical discovery which might make a flutter in the Royal Society and which might just possibly affect practical electro-magnetics to some slight degree, but that he was about to find something else, something much more important, a completely new development, a physical reaction of a kind hitherto unknown, whose nature he could now see clearly although only experimental test could determine its amplitude. It might be something very small, measured by practical standards—Pethwick could picture ingenious lecturers devising neat little mechanisms for displaying what would be called the Klein-Pethwick Effect—or it might be great, very great indeed, so great as perhaps to affect the history of the world.

We all know now that it was great enough to do so, and indeed might have done so if Pethwick had been only a mathematician, and not a man married to a drunken wife, and in love with his headmaster's daughter, and subject to all the other influences which these pages have endeavoured to describe. But to get back to the amazing train of events which, like a tropical hurricane, began with an innocent enough disturbance of a minor sort—

MR. HOLLIDAY was one of those bluff and burly young men who stand no nonsense from boys. As the assistant physics master at the Liverpool School he was just as efficient as at the nets where the boys liked him even when they did not know that he had only just missed his Blue as a fast bowler for Cambridge. He never had any qualms about discipline. He could face and tackle any crisis.

On that historic occasion a year ago when some naughty boys hid a parcel of fish in a locker in the laboratory on the day before the half-term holiday, so that when the school reopened four days later the place stank like a whaling station in the hot weather, it was Mr. Holliday who guessed the cause, and who broke open the lockers until the source of the stench was located, and who discovered the miscreants, and who (in accordance with Mr. Laxton's new methods of punishment) caned them most satisfactorily—Dr. Pethwick, his senior, had never caned a boy in his life.

Consequently, when Mr. Holliday observed that IVa was not progressing rapidly with the experiment he had set them to do, after explaining it to them, he plunged boldly into the trouble, selecting, as was his wont, one outstanding individual for censure and, if necessary, punishment.

"What are you looking for, Williams?" he asked, pleasantly. "Trouble?"

Williams was a boy of much the same type as Holliday himself (although Mr. Holliday did not see the resemblance), rather stocky, rather stupid, rather simple.

"No, sir," said Williams. "I'm just asking Merivale if he's getting on all right."

"How nice of you to be so anxious about Merivale," said Holliday. "But I strongly advise you to go back to your place and get on with your experiment."

"I can't, sir, please, sir," said Williams.

"Oh," said Holliday. "So your anxiety about Merivale was not entirely disinterested?"

Mr. Holliday had begun lately to realize the value of sarcasm as a help in the maintenance of discipline and was unconsciously imperilling his popularity thereby. Williams merely stood still and resented Mr. Holliday's remarks in silence.

"I suppose," continued Holliday, "that

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you did not pay attention when I was explaining to you Gauss's method for Determining the Moment of a Magnet. But the diagrams are still on the blackboard. With the help of those you ought to be able to make some progress. I hope you can, Williams, for your sake and especially for the sake of what you sit on."

That was the sort of remark which ought to have drawn a snigger from the rest of the class; Mr. Holliday was quite surprised when it did not come. He looked round at the faces turned towards him from the laboratory benches, and in them he read at last that he was not dealing with naughtiness or indiscipline. He came down from his dais and approached the benches.

"Is anybody else in difficulty?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir," came from different parts of the laboratory.

"Well, what's *your* trouble, then, Maskell?" he went on. Maskell was the clever boy of the form.

"It's this compass needle, sir," said Maskell. "It doesn't seem to work."

Holliday bent over it. He twisted the little glass box around, and the needle spun round idly. When it came to rest it was certainly not pointing to the north. He tapped the case. The needle spun again, and came to rest in a different position. Clearly there was not a trace of magnetism left in it. He approached it to the bar magnet lying on the sheet of paper on which Maskell was conducting his experiment. There was not the least quiver in the needle at all.

"That's queer," said Holliday to himself.

"The magnet seems all wrong, too, sir," said Maskell.

Holliday slipped the magnet into the paper stirrup which hung from the thread, and allowed it to swing free. As soon as the rotation due to the extension of the thread was finished, the magnet swung idly, without a trace of the dignified north-seeking beat which delighted Holliday's heart even now, after observing it a hundred thousand times.

He grabbed another bar magnet from the bench, and brought its north pole towards first the north and then the south pole of the suspending magnet. Nothing happened. He brought the two magnets into contact—so still was the room that the little metallic chink they made was heard everywhere. But neither bar magnet was disturbed. They were quite indifferent. It might have been two pieces of brass he was bringing into contact, for all the attraction that was displayed.

Holliday looked up from the bench; from beneath his fair eyebrows he swept his glance round the form. In the expression on the boys' faces he read interest, indifference or amusement, according to their varying temperaments, but no sign whatever of guilt.

"Are *all* your magnets and compass needles like this?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the form.

Holliday went across to the cupboard and took out the tray of bar magnets. The ones remaining there were in the same state—the keepers joining north and south poles betrayed no trace of adhesion. He called for the laboratory assistant.

"Owens! Owens!"

Owens appeared from his den.

"Did you notice anything funny about these magnets and compass needles when you put them out?" demanded Holliday.

"Well, sir, I thought they—"

HOLLIDAY heard half of what he had to say and then sent him off. Clearly Owens had no hand in the business, and whatever had been done to the magnets had been done before the lesson began. He stood for a moment in thought. But now the IVa had got over the initial interest and surprise, they seemed likely to take advantage of the unusual state of affairs. They were already beginning to fidget and wiggle and giggle and play—four of the gravest crimes in Mr. Holliday's calendar.

Mr. Holliday took a Napoleonic decision, characteristically. He swept away the whole question of Determining the Moment of a Magnet. He called to Owens for blocks of glass, and pins; he mounted his dais, and wiped the blackboard clean of Gauss's method. Within two minutes the subject of the lesson was changed to the Determination of the Index of Refraction of Glass, whereby there was no risk of further trouble due to the mischievous activities of naughty boys with the electro-magnetic apparatus. And, true to the disciplinary standard which Mr. Holliday had set himself the boys reaped nothing of what they would term benefit, from someone unknown's misdemeanour.

Although half an hour had been wasted, in the remaining hour the class had completed the experiment, thanks to Mr. Holliday's shrewd driving of them. No gap had been made in the sacred syllabus—the Determination of the Moment of a Magnet could safely be left now until the old magnets had been remagnetized.

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When the class was finished Mr. Holliday considered it his duty to go in and report to his senior, Dr. Pethwick, upon the latest misbehaviour of the boys. But Dr. Pethwick did not receive the news in a sensible fashion—indeed, Holliday had no hope that he would. He was in the little advanced physics laboratory, which had gradually become his own owing to the dearth of boys needing instruction in advanced physics.

Later on Mr. Holliday made many and desperate efforts to recall just what apparatus there was upon the bench engaging his attention when Holiday walked in, but he never succeeded. The big electrometer was there, Holliday noticed, and there was a lead from the power plug in the wall to some simple make-and-break which was buzzing cheerfully away surrounded by various other instruments.

But of those other instruments Mr. Holliday, later on, could only recall a vague picture of a big red magnet and something which might have been a glowing radio valve or even a vacuum tube, so casual had been Mr. Holliday's glance as a result of the indignation which burned and seethed within him.

"There's been trouble again in the junior lab," said Mr. Holliday.

Dr. Pethwick merely turned his lean white face towards him and did not hear him.

"Some of these young devils have demagnetized every blessed magnet in the magnet drawer," expanded Mr. Holliday.

That news certainly seemed to have some effect upon Dr. Pethwick. He switched off the current so that the buzz of the make-and-break stopped abruptly, and came round the bench to Holliday. His hands flapped. Mr. Holliday, recounting the interview much later, described him as looking like a new-caught fish flapping on the bank.

"Every blessed one," said Holliday, referring still to the magnets. "And the compass needles as well. I bet it's Horne and Hawkins and that crowd."

"D-do you think so?" quavered Dr. Pethwick.

"It's two months since the last of their silly practical jokes," fumed Holliday. "They were just about due for another. But they've bitten off more than they can chew this time. I wouldn't have a bottom like the one young Horne is going to have tomorrow for something."

Dr. Pethwick's eyebrows rose. Holliday attributed the gesture to his own outspokenness regarding young Horne's bottom—no one ever mentioned bottoms to Dr. Pethwick—but he stood his ground stoutly.

"He's jolly well earned it," he said, "and he's going to get what's coming to him."

Dr. Pethwick seemed more embarrassed than ever.

"I—I shouldn't do anything about it yet—" he began. "Perhaps—"

"But I must," protested Holliday. "These things have to be jumped on at once. Hard."

Then Mr. Holliday attributed Dr. Pethwick's hesitancy to fear of what Mr. Laxton would say regarding yet another disciplinary row on the Science side.

"Oh, don't you worry," he went on, hotly. "We won't have any song and dance about it. I'll have young Horne and Hawkins up in my classroom this evening and get the truth out of 'em. I'll give 'em six each and that will be the end of that."

"But—" said Dr. Pethwick. "But—"

These un-Napoleonic "buts," this dilatoriness, set a seal on Holliday's wrath. He issued a proclamation of independent action.

"Anyway," he said, "it happened in *my* class, and it's *my* business to deal with it. And I'm going to."

And with that he flung out of the advanced physics laboratory, leaving Dr. Pethwick bending over his experimental bench with a worried look on his face. Dr. Pethwick straightened his back, and eyed his apparatus again. He opened the door leading through to the senior laboratory, and looked at the cupboard which held the drawer of bar magnets. He noted its position.

Standing in the doorway he looked back and forward, noting the relative positions of his emitter, the magnet he was experimenting with, and the magnet cupboard. There could be no doubt now that the Klein-Pethwick Diamagnetic Effect was very marked and powerful. It set him wondering whether anywhere further along that straight line—beyond the walls of the school, perhaps, perhaps ten miles away—any more magnets had lost their magnetism. Then with a rush and a clatter Remove B came pouring into the senior laboratory, and Dr. Pethwick had to turn aside and disconnect his apparatus in the advanced laboratory.

The five minutes which he expended on that were a golden time for Remove B. Without supervision for that period they played Old Harry throughout the senior laboratory, with the result that by the time

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Dr. Pethwick was ready to give them their lesson they were well out of hand, and that, combined with a certain abstractedness on the part of Dr. Pethwick, led to the lesson developing into a most delightful exhibition of rowdyism.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Holliday was encountering both ridicule and opposition, which, such was his temperament, only served to confirm him in his opinion. Up in the common-room the staff went to no pains to conceal their amusement at hearing that he had had a lesson spoilt by the machinations of Horne and Hawkins and their followers.

"I never knew a science class yet where discipline was maintained," said Stowe, who taught classics.

Holliday could only glower at him; the statement was too idiotic even to contradict.

"Yes," added Malpas, the Modern Languages master, "don't you remember the great fish joke? That was a rare one."

"They got all that was due to them, all the same," said Holliday, taking the offensive against his better judgement.

"Really?" said Malpas, lunging neatly for the opening. "It doesn't seem to have done much good, all the same, judging by this new development."

"If I were better supported—" glowered Holliday, and Malpas and Stowe tittered gently.

"Discipline is a one-man job," said Malpas solemnly, quoting words used by the Head on a previous occasion. Holliday was a simply ideal man to rag.

"But look here, Holliday," said Dutton, who taught Chemistry. "D'you mean to say they quite demagnetized about thirty bar magnets, and compass needles as well?"

"I do," snarled Holliday.

"Of course," said Dutton, "I'm only a chemist, and I'm not very up to date, and I came down from Cambridge a good long time before some of you younger men, but I always understood it was jolly difficult to demagnetize iron *completely*. There ought to have been enough left for IVb to get some sort of result, surely."

Dutton was only partly attempting to annoy Holliday; he was really interested in the point he had raised.

"I wouldn't put anything past Horne and Hawkins," interposed Malpas, who knew nothing about the subject at all.

"But what about the compass needles?" said Dutton. "If you take a bar magnet and chuck it about a lot I suppose you can weaken it nearly to zero, but it would puzzle *me* to demagnetize a compass needle in a brass case without damaging the case."

"Oh, you don't know our young scientists," said Malpas, airily. "They better their instruction. Young Hawkins is an inventive genius, you know, and he's blossomed out under Holliday's parental care. Don't you remember the Aeolian harp? I bet *you* do, Summers."

Summers was the geography master. In their last rag before the celebrated rotten-fish joke Horne and Hawkins had profited by Holliday's instruction in Elementary Sound to construct an Aeolian harp and had hung it out of the window just before Summers came in to teach them; during the subsequent hour the wild fitful music called forth by the wind had pervaded the room in a weird and ghostly fashion, driving Summers nearly to distraction. He had turned out every boy's desk and pockets seeking for the source of the noise; he had even (led on by the tactful suggestions of the form humorists) sent a message to the music room before he had succeeded in solving the mystery.

Everyone laughed at the recollection, and Summers had to defend himself.

"Anyway," he said, heatedly, "I had them nailed down within the hour, and they've never forgotten it, either. They haven't tried any practical jokes on *me* twice."

That is the way the history of the world is built up. Malpas's reference to a schoolboy's Aeolian harp, and Summers' hot rejoinder on the subject sufficed both to distract Holliday's attention from Dutton's very relevant suggestion and to raise his temper to such a pitch that he forgot all about it until it was too late. Otherwise Holliday might easily have followed up the idea, and guessed at Dr. Pethwick's responsibility in the matter, and the history of the world might have been different.

As it was, Holliday remained filled with righteous indignation all afternoon, and, having sent for Horne and Hawkins after afternoon school, abruptly charged them with a crime entirely absent from their calendar, extensive though it was. Even the ready wits of these two young gentlemen failed them when they found themselves confronted with an accusation of demagnetizing.

They had come prepared to refute charges of brewing sulphuretted hydrogen in the class-room inkwells and of tying up the school bell-rope the week before so that the porter had to find a ladder before

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ringing the bell (so that the school happily missed five minutes of lessons) and of those two crimes they were only guilty of one. But this demagnetizing business beat them. They stuttered and stammered, and their innocence compared badly with the virtuous indignation they would have assumed to perfection if they had been guilty.

Holliday, firmly convinced from the start of their guilt, was raised to a pitch of positive certainty by their blundering denials. He fell upon them in the end and beat them with all the shrewd application of strength and perfection of timing to be expected of a man who had only just missed his cricket Blue. It did him a world of good, and it is to be hoped that it did Horne and Hawkins a world of good, too.

The trouble was that when he boasted of the dead to Dr. Pethwick the latter was intensely embarrassed about it. No man as shy as he was could face all the commotion and explanations and fuss and bother consequent upon owning up to an act for which two schoolboys had been caned. Dr. Pethwick shrank with horror from the thought of the common-room remarks, and Mr. Laxton's clumsy comments, and the apologies which would have to be tendered to Horne and Hawkins. And, as a man of retiring disposition will do, he readily found reasons and excuses for not assuming the responsibility. He wanted to investigate the Klein-Pethwick Effect a little more closely before publishing his results.

He did not want publicity. The modest columns of the Philosophical Transactions were good enough for him. He knew that the Fellowship of the Royal Society was a certainty now. He knew that Einstein and Eddington would be pleased and congratulatory because the mere demonstration of the existence of the Klein-Pethwick Effect was a substantial confirmation of the Theory of Relativity, and additional mathematical investigation might be enormously important. He decided that as the summer holidays were not far off he would keep his secret until then. And thereby he brought catastrophe a little nearer.

CHAPTER II

DR. EDWARD PETHWICK was in the seventh heaven of delight. He had encountered Miss Dorothy Laxton as he was walking home from school, and she was not merely walking in a direction which would take her past his house, but she actually decided to walk along with him, and she was talking to him with all the intelligence and sincerity with which he credited her.

It was two years now since she had come down from Somerville, and yet she had not lost the desperate earnestness of young Oxford. Disarmament was the subject she chose to discuss with Dr. Pethwick—at least, she would have called it a discussion, but, as anyone might have expected who knew them both, it was not so much a discussion as an expression of Miss Laxton's own views and opinions while Dr. Pethwick supplied the conjunctions.

"The crucial point," said Dorothy, "is that the great majority of people really *don't* want armaments."

"No," said Dr. Pethwick.

"Supposing," said Dorothy, "supposing you could take a free referendum throughout Europe—throughout the world if you like. Supposing the issue was—on the one side, to go on as we are, and on the other side, no armies, no navies, no anything like that at all. Which do you think would win?"

"Which do *you* think?" asked Dr. Pethwick.

"Oh, the peace party," said Dorothy. "Oh, I'm sure of it. After all, who wants these things? People with shares in armament firms, I suppose. And people who want to get their nephews into good jobs. Yes, and the idiots who think fighting's good for people. That's all."

"M'm," said Dr. Pethwick.

"Doesn't it make you furious to think about it all?" asked Dorothy. "The whole wicked business has started again, just as it did before the last war—you know, the war to end war. There's competition in armaments again, and everyone knows where that leads to. If there's an army there must be a staff. And if there's a staff it must make plans to fight someone—that's its job. And every staff must try to find out what the other staff's plans are. And those plans are going to leak out sooner or later. Then there's bad blood, and more plans, and more competition, and people get used to the idea of another war coming so that when it begins there's no real attempt made to stop it.

"It's the mere fact of the existence of armaments which makes war possible, in other words.

"And that general who came down to inspect the Corps last week was talking to Father at dinner about 'our enemies at Geneva!' I wanted to butt in, but—after all he was our guest, and you know what Father is like."

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Again their eyes met, and there was a little significant silence between them. Pethwick had no difficulty in realizing that Mr. Laxton held the strongest views in opposition to his daughter's. And although they did not unite in condemning him openly, there was a feeling of union somewhere. They felt closer together after that, as though they were sharing a secret. Pethwick boiled with secret happiness, and even Dorothy felt an inward comfort.

"And think what they could do if there weren't wars, and armies, and navies and so on. Do you know, that with the money spent in England on armaments, and on paying for the last war, we could send every single man and woman to a University until they were twenty-one, feed them, and clothe them and educate them? *Really* educate them. Think what that would mean to the world!"

Dr. Pethwick could only lift an eyebrow at this statement. He could not even say "M'm."

"Of course," added Dorothy hurriedly, "you'd never persuade people to submit to the amount of taxation they pay now for armaments to pay for education. They'd never do it. But you could do a lot, all the same—clear the slums, and start productive works, and give everyone with talent a chance of better education, anyway. Couldn't you?"

Dorothy's hot brown eyes caught Pethwick's mild grey ones, and held them.

"Couldn't you?" persisted Dorothy.

"Yes," said Pethwick.

Dr. Pethwick would have gone on from there to say how a short time ago he had been interrupted in an important calculation by all the tomfoolery of a review of the Officers' Training Corps under his windows, and he could have drawn a neat parable from the story, if only Dorothy had allowed him to get a single word in edgeways.

"And that's only one side of the question," said Dorothy. "That's without discussing what another war would be like. There are new weapons, and new poisons, and all the other horrors we can hardly bear to think of. Why, do you know, people's minds are so wrapped up in the subject that that even now if there's a new invention the first thought of everyone is how it could be applied in war?"

Dr. Pethwick gave a guilty start at that. He realized that despite his own vaguely pacific views he had devoted a good deal of thought—quite unconsciously, if the expression can be allowed—as to what difference the Klein-Pethwick Effect would make in a modern battle. He was startled.

"As a matter of fact—" he began, slowly. But Dr. Pethwick was not destined to finish that speech for some time to come.

THEY had reached the corner of Launceton Avenue; they were at the front gate of No. 41, where Dr. Pethwick lived. There was someone sitting on the doorstep, leaning back against the angle of the door and the wall. Dorothy, at Pethwick's side, drew a sharp, hissing breath.

It was Mary Pethwick. Her hat hung precariously on the back of her head, and her clothes were daubed with mud. But it was not the condition of her dress which first caught the eye. It was her face. There was mud and there was blood on her face, and it was swollen and puffy and bruised where the flesh could be seen through the mask of blood and mud. The first impression was one of terrible damage after a severe accident.

"Oh," said Dorothy. She ran up the path and bent over Mary, Pethwick hurrying after her.

" 'Sall right," said Mary, lifting the hideous face, and leering at Dorothy through her swollen eyelids. "Norring marrer me. Lirrelassdent. 'S all."

The providence that looks after drunken people had guided Mary's reeling steps to 41, Launceton Avenue quite correctly.

Probably policemen had eyed her sharply as she had staggered along the pavements, but had forborne to arrest a respectably dressed woman. But once inside the gate her mazy determination had deserted her —Pethwick knew how it did. She had fallen down the path. She had fallen at the doorstep. She had bumped her face on the door-handle, and on the step.

Pethwick could see the key lying there, and drops of blood, and the smear on the knob—a scientist's powers of observation are trained like a detective's. Dazed and silly, she had turned away from the door and fallen again in the muddy flower-bed below the front window. After that, with one last effort of the clouded mind, she had pulled herself into the sitting position on the doorstep in which they had found her. And she was still quite ready to deny that there was anything the matter with her.

"Oh, you poor thing!" said Dorothy, bending over her.

" 'S all right, I tell you. 'M all righ'. Assdent."

Dorothy looked around at Pethwick. His face was grey.

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"I'll take her in," he said quietly. "You'll be late for your meeting."

He reached past her, without meeting her eyes, to open the door.

"Don't you want a doctor?" asked Dorothy. She still thought that Mary had at least been run over, and she had never seen a drunken woman before.

"No," said Pethwick slowly. "I don't think a doctor is necessary. I'll look after her."

He stooped to lift Mary's swollen body from the doorstep, and while he was doing so a sudden rush of realization came to Dorothy. She remembered all she had heard whispered about Mary Pethwick in scholastic tea-parties. "You know, my dear," a schoolmaster's wife would whisper to a schoolmaster's cousin, "she *drinks!*"

Dorothy remembered that at times Mrs. Pethwick had acted queerly when she met her—her speech had been uncertain and ill-connected, and her gait hesitating. Up to that moment Dorothy had, very wisely, discounted the evidence of gossip, and she had distrusted the evidence of her own ears and eyes. But here was the thing proved to her.

Pethwick had put his long thin arms round his wife's body, and was half carrying her, half dragging her into the hall, his long frail body bending under the strain. Dorothy took her round the knees and lifted her weight off the floor—Dorothy's compact, well-trained physique was far better adapted to carrying weights than Pethwick's gangling figure. Between them they got her up the stairs and laid her on the bed in the littered bedroom. Examining the bruised face with a more dispassionate eye, Dorothy could see now that the damage was superficial.

"Bring me some warm water," she said, "and a flannel, and a basin. I'll look after her."

By the time Pethwick came up again Dorothy had been busy. She had taken off the muddy dress and shoes, and tucked Mary up in bed. Resolutely she had kept herself from shuddering at what she noticed—Mary's horrid underclothes, and the dingy sheets, and Pethwick's ragged pyjamas which she had tucked away under his pillow.

She took the basin from Pethwick's trembling hands, felt the temperature of the water, soaked the flannel, and began to sponge away the dirt and blood from Mary's face.

"'Oo d'you fink *you* are?" said Mary suddenly. "Chuck it. You're 'urting."

When Mary was sober she generally managed to gloss over to a small extent the rasping Cockney dialect of her childhood, but when she was drunk it was more apparent than ever.

"I'm afraid it's got to be done," said Dorothy, gently.

With one hand she held Mary's feeble two; Mary's head rested in the crook of her arm, and with her other hand she went on sponging.

There had been occasions before when she had dressed the hurts of her six-year younger brother.

"Assident," said Mary.

The mud and the blood were wiped away. Beneath them Dorothy found three small cuts and a big bruise—a black eye.

"It's all right, I think," said Dorothy, trying to examine these coolly.

"'Sall right. Lemme 'lone."

The torpor of drink was fast engulfing Mary. The bruised head turned on Dorothy's arm and drooped towards the pillow.

"Give me the towel," ordered Dorothy, "and you can take those things away."

PETHWICK, waiting down in the little hall, heard Dorothy's step above as she gave a few last touches to the bedroom. He heard Mary's cracked voice sing a couple of bars of a song, tuneless and mirthless, before it trailed away into silence. Then the door shut and Dorothy came down the stairs.

The doors were all open in the hall. Dorothy could see the disordered sitting-room and kitchen, all the filth and evidence of neglect. There ran through her mind a memory of what her father had said—"a very brilliant young mathematician." And he stood there at the foot of the stairs, and the working of his face revealed the torment within him. He was clasping and unclasping his hands, and even in that light and at that moment Dorothy noticed their slender beauty.

She was sick with unhappiness at the fate which had overtaken him, and it was revealed to her what horrors he had been through uncomplainingly. And she had always liked him, and now she more than liked him. She put out her hands toward his beautiful ones.

"Oh," she said, as weakness overtook her. She swayed for a moment holding his hands before she came forward on to his breast.

Dorothy had been kissed at parties by subalterns and graduates, and there had once been a mad interval with a young

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surgeon, but there had never been anything like this. She felt she wanted to give and give. She would tear herself to shreds if only that would alleviate some of his unhappiness.

Pethwick kissed her forehead and her cheek. He did not feel himself worthy of her lips. It did not even occur to him to venture on such a sacrilege. He held her hands. He stooped, and with infinite tenderness and reverence he kissed their cool palms. He was awestruck and humble, like a knight in the presence of the Grail. One of the Lordly Ones had taken notice of his existence, had tacitly given him leave to worship at her feet where formerly he had only worshipped from afar. She smiled as he bent before her, and touched his thin fair hair, and his ears, and the nape of his neck, so that he dared all, and kissed her lips as she smiled, and entered into Paradise.

Presently sanity came back to them in some degree.

"What about your meeting?" he whispered.

"I'm too late for that—anyway," she whispered back, and she kissed him again, and for a time sanity disappeared once more, as it will sometimes even in the case of Honours Graduates in History and Doctors of Science.

It could not last long, for all that. Pethwick was neither a bold enough lover nor sufficiently experienced. Soon they became aware that they were kissing in a squalid little house; that beside them was a kitchen stacked with dirty dishes, and beside that a sitting-room thick with dust and litter, and that overhead there lay a drunken woman whose snores were penetrating the bedroom door and drifting down the stairs to them, so that they fell apart a little self-consciously.

Pethwick's fingers twittered. He wanted to shut that kitchen door and shut out all sight of that muddle, but he could not do it unobtrusively. Dorothy saw the gesture.

"Were *you* going to clear up?" she asked.

Pethwick nodded, shamefaced. He did not mind how much he did for his wife, but he came from a stratum of society wherein there is something to be ashamed of in the admission that a man may do housework.

"I'll help you," said Dorothy.

That was how they got over their self-consciousness. Amid the boiling of kettles, and clattering of dishes, while Dorothy, bare-armed, worked with scourer and mop, and Pethwick wiped and put away, there was no room for false modesty. They were friends again as well as sweethearts by the time washing up was finished, and they were both happily conscious of it, too.

When it was all finished Dorothy looked at her wrist-watch as she replaced it.

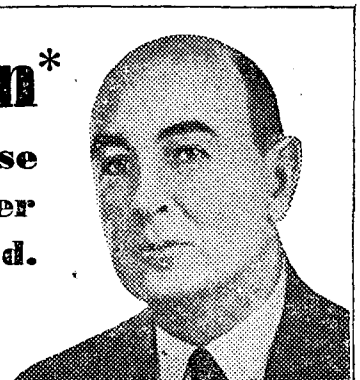
"I really ought to be going," she said.

Pethwick nodded. His experience of life so far had not given him any illusions that Paradise might continue forever. Dorothy might have added, "I don't want to," to her statement that she must be going, but she did not. She could only look like it, and Pethwick with bowed head missed the expression on her face. When he looked up again she was pulling on her gloves.

A scientist may be an unsatisfactory lover. His training may lead him to deduce from a gesture of that sort the intention of immediate departure. He led the way back through the hall to the front door. The manners he had to acquire caused him to open the door, which was a pity, because that meant their farewell could be seen from the street and must therefore be restrained. Yet Dorothy put both

Timothy P. Sexton*

has switched to Calvert because Calvert makes a smoother Old Fashioned.



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her hands in his to say good-bye. The fading evening light lit up his mild, kindly face.

"Good-bye," said Dorothy, and then, after a second's pause, "You *dear*."

With that she was gone, hurrying out to the gate and along the pavement, lest he should see the tears which had come to her eyes at the thought of the sorrow he had borne and still would bear, uncomplainingly.

Pethwick stood long at the door staring after her, long after she was out of sight, and he turned away at length back into an everyday world which was somehow all misty with happiness. And while the human, ordinary part of him was musing shyly over this amazing occurrence, the incorrigible mathematical part had picked up the thread of those Klein-Pethwick calculations once more, and was evolving more and more surprising results.

Presumably that was how in Pethwick's mind his love for Dorothy and his researches into electro-magnetics became so intertwined that he could never think about the one without the other; and that, quite probably, is the germ of the subsequent development whereby in Pethwick's mind the employment of the Klein-Pethwick Effect to solve problems of disarmament was so seriously considered. The stage of the world was being set for the tragedy.

IT WAS in this fashion that Dorothy Laxton and Edward Pethwick became sweethearts. They never were, in all their short period of happiness, any more than that. Seeing that it was only for a few weeks that their happiness endured they never came to know the strain that such happiness brings with it.

They could chatter together unendingly. Pethwick was the kind of man who has to learn what love is—the love that takes a man by the throat and rouses the instincts of Neanderthal man even in the bosom of a professor of mathematics. He learnt that too late; his love affair did not last long enough. He was too unsure of himself, his love for Dorothy was too selfless, quite apart from the fact that circumstances were too strongly against them.

It took a long period of chatter about disarmament or housing reform to rouse him to the pitch of wanting to kiss Dorothy—or rather of realizing that he wanted to—and when he did want to he rarely could. A headmaster's daughter and an assistant schoolmaster are surrounded by spies, voluntary and involuntary. There are hundreds, thousands, of people who know them by sight and are willing to talk about them; and Pethwick and Dorothy were loftily above setting themselves to deceive the world. Rather than that they submitted to having nothing to deceive the world about.

Besides, the talk in which they indulged was exciting, pleasurable in itself. While they were coming to know each other Dorothy could pour out to Pethwick all the ideas which had fermented in her mind during the two years she had been housekeeping for her father. Two years of housekeeping (Dorothy had agreed about that when she came down from Somerville) should be part of every woman's training, even when she is an Honours Graduate in History, but they can be deadly dull. They can be made duller still by the additional duties attendant upon doing the honours of a secondary school headmaster's household, especially when one's mind is chock-a-bloc with ideas about how the world should be reformed—ideas which are consistently scouted by one's father and one's young brother, and are simply horrifying ("My dear, that sounds like *socialism*") to the wives of the Staff.

All the Staff had wives who thought (presumably Laxton chose Staff who would marry that sort of wife) that poor people preferred drawing unemployment pay to doing work, and preferred slums to good houses, and did not mind their babies dying, and ought to contribute to the cost of a war fought when they were children, and who thought there was something underhand about co-operation, and something undignified about the League of Nations, and something impossible about disarmament, and who were so generally uncreative that Dorothy's blood boiled whenever she had anything to do with them.

Pethwick was different. He was a man who *did* things—even though the things he did were quite unintelligible to her. He had the open mind of a scientist, and he had a first-hand knowledge of working-class life which Dorothy was glad to draw upon for information. Pethwick had no prejudices. Pethwick's mind was not hidebound. If his pacifism had been merely quiescent and not rabid up to this time it was because his interest had been concentrated on other creative ideas. As it was, her notions fell on fertile soil. He caught her enthusiasms rapidly, and they would agree with each other until they

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Must the cycle ever be the same? Can mankind never hold back the storm?

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were quite intoxicated with each other's good sense and the world seemed a brighter happier place even though they had not yet remoulded it save in conversation.

It was quite early in their new friendship that Dorothy heard of the Klein-Pethwick Effect. Oddly enough—it is thus that the history of the world is built up—it was a discussion regarding corporal punishment which brought the matter into conversation. Dorothy adduced as part of her argument Mr. Holliday's boastings (recounted by Mrs. Holliday) about how he had brought Horne and Hawkins to reason. She checked herself when she saw the queer guilty look on Pethwick's face. For a moment she was tormented with the idea that she had hurt his feelings by this thoughtless allusion to the lack of discipline on the Science Side. But it was not that at all.

"You know," began Pethwick doubtfully, "it was my fault that those boys were beaten."

Somehow Dorothy's views on corporal punishment altered a little at that. If it were Pethwick's doing, then something might be said in favor of corporal punishment—that was how she felt, even if it were not how she thought.

"Do you mean you wanted Mr. Holliday to—" she asked.

"No!" said Dr. Pethwick hotly. "No. They didn't deserve it. I didn't want him to cane them. I—I ought to have stopped him."

"Why?" asked Dorothy, softly.

"It—it was I who did the thing Holliday was so annoyed about, not Horne and Hawkins."

"You?" said Dorothy, amazed.

"Yes," said Pethwick, and he began to make her the first announcement of his discovery, rather shyly, and with a difficulty regarding his words. He was actuated by the same motives as caused an Elizabethan adventurer to pour the riches of the Spanish Main at his lady's feet, or a Dyak head-hunter to present to his betrothed the fruits of his latest war-making expedition.

"You see," said Pethwick, "I was carrying out a series of experiments in the advanced lab. I wanted to confirm some calculations of mine, based on some suggestions Klein put forward last year. You see, I've made a discovery."

"Oh, *good*," said Dorothy.

"It's rather interesting," went on Pethwick, "because—"

"Because?"

PETHWICK found himself confronted with the necessity of explaining the most recent development of modern physics to an Honours Graduate in History, to whom the name of Relativity meant no more than that name, and whose knowledge of electricity was limited to the ability to change a blown fuse-wire. He evaded the difficulty as far as he could.

"Theoretically it's very important," he said, "at least I think so. We'll soon know what the people who really matter think about it. It's one side—one facet, you might say—of a confirmation of the Theory of Relativity. There are various deductions which may be made from it, I think. It throws rather an interesting light on various hypotheses. But practically it boils down to a contra-magnetic effect—that is the only word I can think of—exerted over a field extending to a considerable distance from the emitter—I don't know even now quite how far."

"Yes?" said Dorothy. For a moment she pretended to understand, until her good sense got the better of her. Then she went on—"I don't know what you mean. Don't forget I never studied physics. Could you say it again, differently?"

"Well, it's this way. By using quite a simple sort of emitter I can create a curious contra-magnetic effect for some distance."

"Oh, a sort of ray?"

Dorothy found that rather thrilling. She had read of death rays in the thrillers she sometimes condescended to read.

"No, *not* a ray," said Pethwick with asperity. Then he softened. "Well, I suppose the lay public would call it a ray. That's what the newspapers would say. But all I can say is it's an Effect—the wave hypothesis is in a state of flux just now, you know."

"But what is this Effect? What does it do?"

"Oh, I told you. It's contra-magnetic—very strongly so indeed."

"But—but—I'm sorry to be so ignorant, but what is a contra-magnetic effect, please?"

"In this case it means that any magnets in that field lose their magnetism. Permanently, in the case of permanent magnets. Magnetism cannot exist in that field. I fancy—"

Pethwick had to check himself. It was impossible to go on with the simplest of his hypothetical explanations of the phenomenon to someone ignorant of scientific terminology. And it was obvious that

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Dorothy had not realized the practical implications of what he had just said. He pulled himself together. He tried to make himself imagine that he was not addressing a Lordly One, but some inky third-form boy.

"There might be quite important consequences, you know," he said. "For instance— You drive a motor-car, don't you? In that motor-car is a magnet."

"Is there?"

Dorothy was one of those people who drive brilliantly and can execute all running repairs and still not realize that a motor-car is driven by the repeated explosion of mixtures of combustible gas and air ignited by an electric spark.

"Oh, of course there is. The dynamo—the magneto, in other words—is just a permanent magnet with a coil of wire rotating in its field. The self-starter is a coil of wire and an electro-magnet. Well, if while you are driving your car you come into this contra-magnetic effect—"

"The magnet would go on strike and I should stop."

"Quite. And you wouldn't be able to go on again until you had bought yourself a new magneto and put it in in place of the old one."

"Oh," said Dorothy. "Now I see."

She was very much impressed.

"The permanent magnet and the electro-magnet," went on Pethwick, trying to talk with the eloquence of those popular handbooks on science which he detested, "occupy a very important position in our economy. There's hardly a piece of apparatus in which they don't play a part. Trams, buses, motor-cars, trains, telephones, aeroplanes, generating stations, transformers, railway signals, not one could function without the aid of magnetism. We owe all our modern civilization to Faraday, in other words."

"And now *you* know," said Dorothy, "how to put the clock back to before Faraday's time."

"Yes," said Pethwick simply, and they were both of them silent for a while. Then Pethwick began again, uneasily.

"Of course," he said, "looked at in that light, the possibilities are all destructive, not constructive. But it isn't so. And I didn't intend it that way when I began the calculations. It helps electro-magnetic theory on enormously, I fancy. It—"

He was up again against the blank wall of Dorothy's ignorance of physics. There was only this one aspect of the discovery which she could appreciate.

"You remember once saying something to me about the application of new inventions in war?" he said.

"Yes."

"When you said that, even I had been thinking about—this."

They looked at each other.

"You could stop aeroplanes?" said Dorothy.

"Well, yes, I think so. It wouldn't be very easy of course. About as difficult as catching an aeroplane in the beam of a searchlight. But it could be done with a fair amount of certainty."

"So that bombing raids could be stopped?"

"Yes, I thought of that. And you could put submarines out of action under water. And tanks would be no use. And in favorable conditions you could hold up the motor transport of an army. And make ships' compasses useless—unless by chance they were gyroscopic. You could make war impossible that way."

Pethwick looked at Dorothy anxiously for approval. But there the student of science was up against the student of history. Just for a moment Dorothy agreed with him. Then she remembered some of what she had read in that connection.

"No!" she said passionately. "Don't you believe that. There is no invention which can stop war in that way. Every time a new weapon has been discovered mealy-mouthed people have said that it would put an end to war. Macauley makes the suggestion somewhere. Why, just after the last war people said that the new weapons would make war so horrible that there would never be another. But they're talking about the next war now, aren't they? Remember Bloch? He predicted what the last war would be like twenty years before it happened, but he went on to say that no country would be foolish enough to fight if it meant fighting that sort of war. But they did, all the same. No, dear, you can't stop war just by altering the rules or the weapons."

DOROTHY was quite out of breath as a result of this long speech. She had to stop for a moment, while Pethwick blinked at her sadly. He had really thought that a pacifist application of his invention was possible, and he had been exalted at the thought of the pleasure it would give her. He could be logical enough with mathematical formulae, but his brain was not so ready in dealing with problems of human nature. But now that his ideas had

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been guided in the right direction he himself could follow up the deduction.

"No," he agreed unhappily. "This wouldn't stop war. I see now. If it ruled out tanks and aeroplanes we should get back to the old system of trench warfare without any of the solutions of the problem. Then we should be worse off than before, I suppose."

Pethwick's keen mind was groping among his limited general knowledge and his memories of what he had read casually about war.

"Anyway," he went on, "there are probably counter-measures which could be taken. I've explored some of the avenues without finding one, but of course I have hardly touched the subject. There almost for certain is some sort of screen which could guard against the Effect. If the engine were protected things would go on just as before. And of course there is no application of Diesel engines and steam engines and so on. They'd find a way out of the difficulty."

"They would," agreed Dorothy bitterly. "Every weapon has found its antidote sooner or later. Look at the race between guns and armour."

"I ought to have thought of all this before," said Pethwick, and his disappointment was evident in his voice.

With that, remorse tore at Dorothy's vitals. She had allowed herself to be run away with her hobby. She was crabbing her lover's invention just because it could not put an end to war.

"Oh, my dear," she said. "Don't be so unhappy about it. I should have had more sense. You've made a wonderful discovery, and here I am not saying how pleased I am about it. Because I *am* pleased. It's the best news I've ever heard."

She looked up at Pethwick striding along on his gangling legs beside her. There was a look in her eyes which gave Pethwick as much pleasure as the thought of Einstein's congratulations.

Dorothy in the old days, before she had a sweetheart, had told herself that in her relations between her and her man she would never display the blind self-abnegation of the woman of the previous generation—she would never knuckle under the way her own mother, for instance, had knuckled under to her father. She was quite sure that any respect would be mutual.

But in this case it was not so easy. She was utterly ignorant of science. She had to take so much on trust. The one thing she was sure of was that if Pethwick said that his discovery was important it was very important indeed — epoch-making, perhaps. She was most profoundly impressed, for she had all the exaggerated respect for scientific discovery which characterizes the layman. And she was very glad, vaguely, that she had this feeling of Pethwick's superiority over her.

"Are you publishing your results?" she asked.

"Y-yes," said Pethwick. "I ought to do so at once, of course. But I thought—"

His embarrassment was obvious. Dorothy found herself making tactful noises, and was slightly surprised thereat.

"You see," plunged Pethwick, "after Holliday had caned Horne and Hawkins there'd be such a fuss if it all came out now that I was the one who had really done what they were beaten for. There'd be so many explanations. I thought I'd wait a little while, until the summer holidays began."

Dorothy, to her eternal credit, grasped the implication without smiling. If her lover should choose to postpone the attainment of world-wide fame in order to avoid a few common-room explanations and formalities, she could not possibly interfere. A man who rated comfort so far above celebrity was unique in her circle of acquaintances. And there was another aspect of the matter—

"So am I the only person you've told?" she asked.

"Yes," said Pethwick. "You're the only one."

Dorothy told herself she was a fool to feel so absurdly pleased about that, but the tone she used was not a very convincing one. Then a new fear gripped her.

"But supposing someone else makes the same discovery?" she said. "Supposing while you're waiting— Somebody else might get all the credit."

"I don't think it matters," said Pethwick, "who it is that first discovers a thing, as long as somebody does. The personal element isn't really important in science, is it? It's only the progress that counts."

Pethwick enunciated the simple selfless creed of the scientist without any *arrière-pensée* at all. He meant just what he said. Dorothy found herself gaping at this sublime simplicity. She decided that scientists had a good deal in common with the very early Christian Fathers. And more than that; she felt herself overflowing with tenderness towards him just on account

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of this very simplicity. For a moment she put a hand on his arm, despite the fact that they were in a public street in the presence of a thousand potential spies.

"But I'd like you to get the credit," she said, reproachfully. "You deserve it. You're just the sort of man—"

Dorothy reined herself in; she felt, despite her intelligent lack of superstition, that she was speaking words of ill omen. The remainer of her sentence, if she had finished it, would have been— "who does the work and never gets the credit for it." She realized at that instant that her words were truer than she had thought. She vowed to herself then and there that if ever there was a controversy as to who was entitled to fame on this account she would fight tooth and nail for Pethwick.

Even Pethwick could not help noticing the anxiety in her face.

"I don't think anyone else is likely to make the discovery," he said. "It's some time since Klein published his calculations, and he died last year. And Norbury, who's been working on those lines since then, doesn't seem to have made any progress. You see, you couldn't call it a *simple* piece of mathematics. It—it's very involved, in fact. Klein himself, who had a very great mathematical brain indeed, didn't see where he was aiming at. In fact he was aiming at something quite different at the time of his death. He'd missed one of the implications of his formulae.

"I don't think he would have realized for a long time the possibility of this development, if he did at all. And Norbury's rather—well, rather a charlatan as far as mathematics are concerned. None of the people working along these lines now are really capable of doing very much along them. As far as I know, of course."

Dorothy could only look at him and smile. The man grew more adorable with every word he uttered. "A very great mathematical brain," forsooth, had "missed one of the implications." Yet Pethwick had missed an implication, too—a simpler one, to the effect that in that case his own mathematical brain was greater still. And Norbury—one of the few scientific names with which she was familiar and which appeared in the newspapers—was—"well, rather a charlatan." Dorothy was perfectly convinced he was if Pethwick could say so so disarmingly. Then Pethwick was a greater man than the great Norbury—if she had met Norbury at a dinner party six months ago she would have been thrilled. Well, she was thrilled now walking along the street with Pethwick.

And with all that, this scientific part of the business was by far the less important half. It was his simplicity she loved him for—the modesty which forbade him from seeing anything remarkable in his achievement or in himself. The man had no notion that he was so astonishingly clever. He was as lovable as a child on that account. Furthermore, he had solved what he couldn't call a "a *simple* piece of mathematics." In this moment of insight Dorothy had a sudden realization of what that involved—the indefatigable patience, the iron resolution, the undismayed perseverance, all the qualities which demanded her admiration and which one would hardly realize could be possessed by a professor of mathematics.

Yet for all this, there was something Dorothy did not know about Pethwick. She did not know that he called her, to himself, "a Lordly One." She did not realize yet that along with the simplicity and modesty which she loved there existed a chronic sense of inferiority.

CHAPTER III

ALTOGETHER, during the second half of that summer term, there were eight occasions when Doctor Edward Pethwick met Miss Dorothy Laxton for conversation without a third person being present. No. 1 was the occasion when Mrs. Pethwick met with her accident on the doorstep—the time when Dorothy's pity roused her to a rather unwomanly forwardness which precipitated the whole affair. It must have been at interview No. 3 that Dorothy heard first about the Klein-Pethwick Effect. At interviews Nos. 4, 5 and 6 their relationship tended to round itself off; raw edges were smoothed away.

It was not specially odd that they were happy without physical endearments and caresses. Neither of them was accustomed to them. It is possible that if Pethwick had not been a married man they might have gone through interviews 2-6 just the same without kissing or even thinking of kisses. The strong emotional stress which had stirred them on the first occasion was wanting. Dorothy was a healthy young woman, but it called for something rather unusual to break down her reserve. And she had her theories, too. Despite—or because of—her modernism she rated intellectual companionship far above emotional companionship; perhaps because she knew much more about the former than about

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the latter. And since it was impossible for them to indulge in caresses without a certain amount of intrigue and scheming they simply did without them, and did not consciously notice the loss.

There was one other factor, too, which contributed to Dorothy's state of mind. She loathed Mary Pethwick with an intense physical loathing; she thought with disgust of her dirty clothing and drunken habits. She was not going to share Pethwick with a woman like that. So she was content—happy, in fact—with the seven casual meetings, a total of perhaps ten hours spent in walking through suburban streets, varied with two occasions when they boldly drank coffee *coram publico* in the confectioner's in the High Street. In these enlightened times no one, not even wives of the Staff, nor parents, could find anything wrong in a married man drinking coffee with a young woman twice in five weeks.

And they debated whether the Locarno Treaty was a betrayal of the League of Nations, and they discussed the crimes committed in the name of liberty at Versailles, and they tried to forecast the future of Cooperation, and they tried to outline a constructive housing policy; but most of all they talked about the two things which held first place in Dorothy's attention—the Klein-Pethwick Effect and Disarmament.

Ordinary people would say that Dorothy had a bee in her bonnet about disarmament, but perhaps it would be just as true, or false, to say that Joan of Arc had a bee in her bonnet about English invasions, or Florence Nightingale about sick-nursing. If Dorothy Laxton's exertions had disarmed the world, set the world free from the haunting fear of war and from the burden of armaments, people nowadays might think about her with the reverence they extend to the other two women.

There might be statues erected to her and essays written about her, and board school children might have to listen to one lesson a year about her life and work. As it is, she can only be described unsympathetically as a young woman with a bee in her bonnet, or sympathetically as a young woman of enthusiasms and convictions.

When seeking out the fundamental causes of things, it can only be concluded that the next step in this disarmament business was taken by Mr. Laxton, of all people—it goes without saying that he did it quite unconsciously.

He did at breakfast-time.

"Have you called on all the married staff this year?" he asked suddenly.

That was naturally—especially in Mr. Laxton's opinion—one of the duties of the daughter of a widowed headmaster.

"Nearly all," said Dorothy, shortly, and prayed that the answer would suffice.

"Whom haven't you called on?" demanded Mr. Laxton.

"Mrs. Summers—she's been away such a lot nursing her mother—and—Mrs. Pethwick."

"You're going to call on Mrs. Pethwick, of course? There're only two weeks left of this term, you know."

"Do you really think I need?" said Dorothy, forcing herself to speak disinterestedly. "She's different from the others. I don't believe she'd notice whether I did or not, and—you know it's hateful to go there."

Mr. Laxton had been a general during the war. He fervently believed the army doctrine that to get the best out of your men you must know them personally—from above, of course; a kind of bird's-eye view. The same rule must necessarily apply to the womenfolk. These condescensions were a help to discipline.

"I know as much about Mrs. Pethwick as you do. Don't you see that because she's different from the others makes all the more reason why you should treat her the same? You're far more likely to encourage her in her—failing if you treat her like an outcast."

"Yes," said Dorothy.

"Try and run in there during the next day or two," concluded Mr. Laxton.

Ir Dorothy had not been Dr. Pethwick's sweetheart she might have continued to argue the matter; but as it was she could only yield. She was morbidly anxious not to discuss Mrs. Pethwick—or Doctor Pethwick, either—with other people.

And that meant that she had to pay the call. Mr. Laxton had the memory for detail which is so necessary in a headmaster or a brigadier-general. Dorothy would not lie to him; one of her theories was that most of the troubles of this world are initiated or kept up by lies, and he would be sure to ask, later, if she had paid the call. So that at four o'clock on a hot Wednesday afternoon Dorothy set herself to carry out the distasteful task. She wore her least obstrusive costume and hat for some obscure reason or other—perhaps because she wanted to

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leave the minimum target for the inevitable remarks which Mrs. Pethwick would make afterwards. Mrs. Pethwick was always shabby and ill-brushed.

DOROTHY came to 41, Launceton Avenue—it was the first time she had been nearer to it than the corner since Mrs. Pethwick's "accident"—and knocked at the door. Naturally, inevitably, it was Pethwick who opened the door. She had been so anxious that he should be out; she hated the thought of having to talk to the two of them together, but presumably he had come home the moment afternoon school was finished. Still, she would have to go through with it now.

"Is Mrs. Pethwick at home?" she asked.

It was a second or two before Pethwick answered, and during that time she had to look up at his face. It was transfigured. His pleasure at this unexpected encounter was obvious. He was like a child, and the renewed realization of this sent a pang through her despite the armour plate of indifference she had so carefully assumed.

"Mary's out at the moment," said Pethwick. "But I'm expecting her any time now. Won't you come in?"

The subsequent history of the world trembled in the balance as Dorothy debated the matter within herself. If she came in she would have an excuse to cut the interview shorter after Mrs. Pethwick's return; if she went away she would only have the whole blessed business to go through again later on. She came in. Pethwick offered her a chair in the dingy sitting-room, and fluttered round her.

For once in a way those two had nothing to say to one another save banalities. They were reduced to remarking how hot it was, and how near the end of term had come, just as if they really were an assistant schoolmaster and his headmaster's daughter. There was awkwardness between them, and Dorothy was fully aware of the indifference to which she was pretending.

"Mary often goes to her mother's in the afternoon," said Pethwick, struggling to force formality into his voice. "But she's nearly always home at tea-time. I can't think what's happened to her."

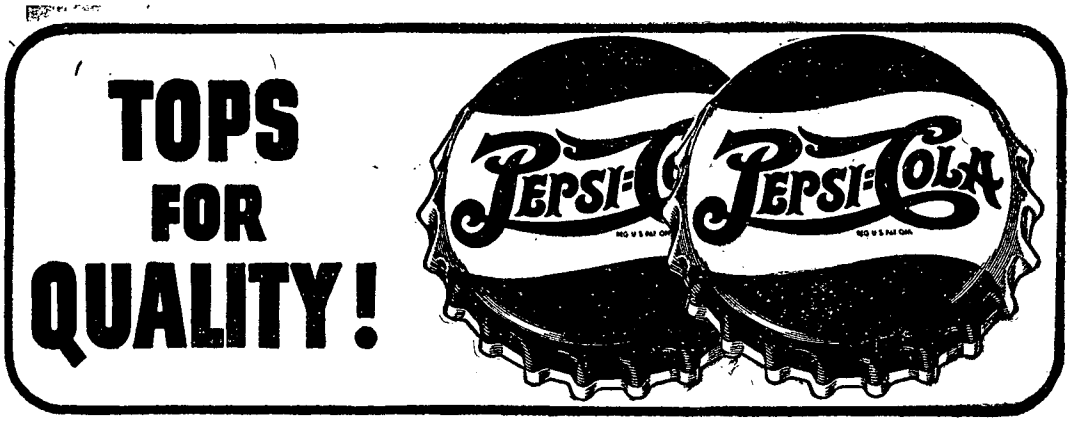
That was an unfortunate remark. Both of them had ideas about what may have happened to her. Pethwick struggled on heroically.

"Let me get you some tea," he said. "I'm sure you need it in this heat."

Dorothy was past even the use of monosyllables by now. She could only make noises. Pethwick went out into the kitchen; through the open door she heard him fill the kettle and put it on the gas stove, and then she heard crockery rattle. For a minute or two she forced herself to sit still, but at last restlessness overcame her and she wandered out into the kitchen too. Some of the necessary tea-things were on a tray, and now Pethwick, inclining his lean length over the table, was laboriously trying to cut wafer-thin bread and butter.

"Oh, let me do that," she said impulsively, and came up beside him to take the knife and loaf from him.

Their hands touched, and Pethwick was a man as well as a mathematician, and Dorothy was a woman as well as a pacifist. Something exploded within them. Pethwick's arms went out to her just as she came into them. Dorothy reacted wildly from her previous pose. Emotion tore at both of them. He caught her against him. Dorothy felt



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the strength drain out of her legs, and Pethwick swayed as her weight came upon his arms. Somehow they tottered through the two doors into the sitting-room. The big arm-chair was ugly, but it received the two of them with grandfatherly hospitality. They kissed and Dorothy's hat fell unregarded to the floor. There were tears in her eyes.

After five minutes the wild trembling ended. They had not mastered themselves, but they could at least be to some extent purposeful. Dorothy swept the hair from her eyes and could look look at him, bending her head back above his encircling arms. With the relaxation of inhibitions the question she had so wanted to ask came leaping from her lips without her volition.

"Tell me," she said. "You don't really love her, do you?"

"No," said Pethwick. "I haven't for years."

With that Dorothy kissed him again, madly, but now that they had begun to talk articulately kisses would not stop Pethwick from uttering the thoughts which came surging up in his mind.

"We must leave her," he said. "We must go away together."

Even at that moment Dorothy noticed that his usual mild tenor was thick and hoarse. It gave her an insight into the turmoil within him.

"You know what you are asking me?" she said.

"Yes," said Pethwick, and now, too late, he tried to return her kisses. She received them, but without the abandon of two minutes ago. And at the first opportunity she went on with her questionings.

"Listen a moment, dear," she said. "Tell me, how much money have you got?"

Pethwick considered for a moment. There was some sort of accumulated balance at the bank; he would receive two months' salary in a fortnight's time. Perhaps he had two hundred pounds—but he knew in that instant that two hundred pounds was nothing in the present crisis. Two hundred pounds a year in Consols was about the least that Dorothy would consider as "money" in this connection.

"I haven't any," said Pethwick.

Dorothy's only hope faded; for a brief space she had been sustained by the thought that by some miracle Pethwick might have considerable savings. She tried to smile at him, and shook her head.

"You say 'Come away with me,'" she said. "What happens to a man who runs away with his headmaster's daughter? You'd lose your job."

"Yes," said Pethwick, sadly.

"Perhaps Father would have to leave too—it's quite possible, but it wouldn't matter, as he'd never have me back again. You'd never get another teaching job, would you? And you'd have to keep us both—and—*her*."

Pethwick drooped a little with every word she said, but she went on, hopefully again, now.

"WHAT about other jobs?" she said. "You're a distinguished scientist. Is there any professorship open to you?"

Pethwick shook his head. He could not conceive of himself pushing into any of the possible posts; they went mostly to people who wrote books and who had a genius for self-advertisement, like Norbury.

"Nothing?" asked Dorothy, sadly.

"There's calculating," said Pethwick desperately. "At the Observatory—"

"Hack work?" demanded Dorothy.

Pethwick could only agree. He had heard what sort of pay was given to mathematical assistants—and he had heard, too, how much competition there was for that employment nowadays.

"That's not the sort of work for you, dear," said Dorothy emphatically. She had an uncanny insight into the by-ways of making a living in the sciences.

"You see, dear," went on Dorothy, "I have to think for the two of us. One of us must be practical-minded at least."

Dorothy left it to be understood that she was practical-minded; she honestly thought she was.

"But when you publish your results," persisted Dorothy. "When people get to hear about the Klein-Pethwick Effect. You'll be famous then, won't you? You'll be distinguished. And then— It won't be more than a few months."

There is little need to follow that conversation further. Perhaps at that very moment a hundred thousand other couples were hoping for a happy consummation of their affairs "in a few months' time" when something or other should happen. Dorothy had no realization of how many people wait in similar circumstances and she had no knowledge of how many people wait in vain. She thought their case was unique.

But they were full of hope; they had only just begun to wait, and they could make their plans hopefully. Dorothy was quite sure that her father would be recon-

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ciled to her marriage via the divorce court if only Pethwick were famous enough and rich enough—and she set her teeth and swore she would not be broken-hearted if her father never were reconciled.

And Pethwick was content to listen to her. He really knew nothing about the practical details of life—he did not even know the conditions that had to be fulfilled before a divorce could be obtained—but of one thing he was sure. On one subject all his early environment made him extremely susceptible, and that was in the matter of employment.

Everyone he had ever known had always had a haunting fear at the back of his mind lest he should lose his job. A job was a thing to be clung to like life itself, at least until a chance of a better one presented itself. Pethwick as a boy had had ample opportunity of observing the miseries of unemployment; Dorothy's mention of the possibility touched him in a tender spot. Perhaps there was no other way at all in which she could have induced him to be methodical in his love.

Yet it was only natural that after their lucid interval they should relapse again. The glowing future of fame and comfort and love which Dorothy painted for them seemed to be very close at hand, and they kissed again in rapture, and they swore eternal faithfulness to each other, as if it were the first time in the history of the world that such vows had ever been exchanged.

Then in the midst of it all something happened. Dorothy went rigid in Pethwick's arms, and tore herself free of him. Somebody was opening the street door with a key, and that somebody could only be Mary Pethwick. Fortunately she fumbled for some time before she got the key in the lock. When Mary came in, stumbling a little as usual, Dorothy had put on her hat again and was sitting self-consciously in a chair, while Pethwick was walking aimlessly and equally self-consciously about the room. Mary eyed the two of them with the endless deliberation of the person who is not quite sober. Dorothy took a grip of herself; she was not born for intrigue.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Pethwick," she made herself say, brightly. "I'm so glad you've come back in time for me to see you. I was just saying to your husband that I didn't think I should be able to stop very much longer."

"Good afternoon," said Mary Pethwick. Pethwick tried to be bright.

"I was just getting tea ready," he said—and as he said it realization came upon all three of them.

"What a funny smell," said Mary Pethwick, and Dorothy went tense and a chill ran down her spine, and Pethwick strode hastily into the kitchen. The little place was full of steam; the gas still burned in the ring on the top of the oven, and on the ring lay a few twisted bits and slips of metal—all that remained of the kettle which Pethwick had set on the gas half an hour before. He tried vainly to conceal the spectacle from his wife as she came lurching after him. Dorothy knew his endeavour would be unsuccessful. Still keeping herself in hand she forced herself to enter the kitchen as well, and to be material about it.

"There!" she said, "We've forgotten all about the kettle! I'm afraid that's my fault, Mrs. Pethwick. The Doctor wanted to get the tea, and I wanted to talk, and between the two of us we simply forgot all about it."

Dorothy tried to laugh. She told herself as she did so that the noise she managed to produce was more like the rattling of a skeleton's bones.

Mary rolled a wide and stupid eye upon her. She said nothing, and hope surged in Dorothy's breast that perhaps she had drunk too much to notice anything odd about the situation. Pethwick tried his best to ease the tension.

"I'll have the other kettle boiling in a minute," he said. "You take Miss Laxton into the sitting room, Mary. Tea won't be long."

Dorothy noticed with approval that he did not sound like a stage conspirator as he spoke. He used the same mild tenor in which he always spoke; it neither trembled nor went flat. Dorothy did not really appreciate this excellence of acting was due to his natural simplicity. If he had a a commonplace thing to say he could not help but say it in a commonplace manner, whatever the tension around him. Dorothy thought it was an undiscovered talent for diplomacy.

The approval she felt did nothing, however, to sustain her during that grim interval in the sitting-room before the reappearance of Pethwick. The room was swelteringly hot, and to her it felt hotter still. She tried to act as she would have acted if she had been paying a call and had not just been kissing Dr. Pethwick—which meant that she had to talk in a spritely manner on indifferent subjects.

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She tried to keep her voice from trembling and her tone normal. But Mary only regarded her with wide expressionless eyes and replied with monosyllables. Dorothy began to feel frightened, until at last the door opened and Pethwick came blundering in with the tea-tray.

Despite all Dorothy's stong opinions on the equality of sexes it irked her to see him doing women's work. She felt annoyed that he should have to make tea and cut bread and butter and put cakes on a plate while this horrible woman sat and did nothing. But the feeling of annoyance was all the same overlaid by the intense embarrassment of the situation. No one ate very much, Mary because she habitually ate very little, and Dorothy and Pethwick because they had no appetite.

Dorothy crumbled a piece of bread and butter; she drank half a cup of tea (in which Mary had put sugar although Dorothy disliked it) and then stood up and said she must go. Mary, still impassive and expressionless, bade her goodbye without attempting to retain her. Pethwick saw her to the door. She felt awkward as she said goodbye to him; she could not meet his eyes.

THERE is a certain diabolical cunning which is the gift of drunkenness. Despite her mazed and muzzy state when she came in Mary had been able to draw the obvious conclusion from the data presented to her—from that melted kettle, and from Dorothy's embarrassed manner, and from Pethwick's unconcern. Such was her cunning that she knew on the instant that she could not trust herself to act effectively on the spot; she would need time to make a plan and carry it through, and until that time came she had best act stupidly.

A woman of Mary's type does not face the possible loss of her husband with equanimity. Mary would fight tooth and nail to keep Pethwick—there is no need to debate the question as to whether or not she loved him; the factor of decisive importance was that she wanted him and was determined to keep him. Even if no other feeling entered into the matter, it was to Pethwick that she owed a social eminence among her friends which she valued, and the moderate amount of money she needed, and the prestige of being a married women. She was not going to risk the loss of these, to face the gratified pity of her friends, without a struggle.

For thirty-six hours she brooded over the business, solitarily. Then, when self-pity overcame her, she plunged into one day's drunkenness. During that day she seemed less than human. It appeared impossible that any train of thought could survive, in that drink-sodden brain. But when the two bottles of whisky were finished (Mary had never acquired any degree of immunity to alcohol) she emerged from the debauch with trembling hands, sick and shaken, and yet with a plan matured and ready for use.

It is hard to say how much of it was conscious thought and how much of it blind instinct. Mary had never admitted to herself that she ever drank at all, and yet she deliberately forced herself into complete sobriety, denying herself the soothing little sips for which her jangled nerves shrieked incessantly. She knew that to carry the plan through she must be rigidly sober—it was bad for her temper, but she held to it with the obstinacy of a mad woman. After two days of complete abstinence she sallied forth to return her call upon Miss Laxton.

Dorothy's heart sank when the parlourmaid announced "Mrs. Pethwick." The visit had taken her quite by surprise. There was no time to do anything. She was "at home" that afternoon, Mrs. Pethwick was already entering the room, and it was only ten minutes past three—it might be as much as an hour before anyone else came in. She put down her book and rose to meet whatever was to come. But here, in her own house, nearly a week after she had last been kissed by Dr. Pethwick, she felt equal to anything. If Mrs. Pethwick had come to make a scene, or if she had come to be more subtly rude, or if she had merely come calling, she would stand her ground and give as good as she got.

"What a pleasure to see you!" she said, crossing the room to meet her. "You don't come nearly often enough. Bring the tea in, please, Beatrice. Where will you sit, Mrs. Pethwick?"

They sat down, and they tried to talk politely while Beatrice jingled in with the tea-tray and while Dorothy poured out tea. Then, when the door was shut again, and they were settled down, there was a curious little pause, as if she were waiting for the other to speak. Just for a moment there fluttered through Dorothy's mind a memory of what she had read about Fontenoy—of the French officers who called out, *"Messieurs les Anglais, tirez les*

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premiers!" as the lines closed. But the impression of hostility vanished at once. Mrs. Pethwick was obviously in a good temper, and obviously quite sober. Dorothy, with only a hearsay knowledge of the effects of drink, decided that Mrs. Pethwick must have no recollection at all of their two previous encounters—of the incidents of the black eye and the melted kettle.

"Have another piece of bread and butter?" said Dorothy.

"Thanks," said Mrs. Pethwick. "I don't mind if I do."

There was a pause while she munched.

"You see," said Mrs. Pethwick, putting the bitten slice carefully on her plate, "you see, I've got to start feeding myself up now."

Dorothy moved uneasily in her chair. She had a horrid doubt—a horrid certainty of what Mrs. Pethwick was going to say next.

"I beg your pardon?" she said.

"Plenty of good nourishing food," said Mrs. Pethwick, complacently. Dorothy's movement had not escaped her. "Of course, it's early days yet for me to be quite sure—not even a month—but I don't think there's any mistake this time. My Ed's awfully pleased."

"W-what?" said Dorothy.

"It's about time, isn't it? We've been married ten years."

"Yes," said Dorothy, wildly, "I think so."

Mrs. Pethwick laughed with admirable self-consciousness.

Dorothy could not bring herself to say anything even idiotic now. Every single word of Mrs. Pethwick's seemed to go clean through her skin and then stick there, barbed and rankling.

"I thought I'd better tell you early," said Mrs. Pethwick. "You see, Ed being a schoolmaster—it's not like any other job. I'll have to keep myself *to* myself quite soon."

"Don't—oh, *don't,"* gasped Dorothy.

"You take my tip," said Mrs. Pethwick, apparently not hearing what Dorothy said. "When you're married, you 'ave one or two kids—don't you listen to them that say they wouldn't for worlds. It makes a wonderful difference to a man. My Ed's been so attentive this last week or two you'd hardly know him."

"Just a minute," said Dorothy—or she tried to say it, or something similar; whatever it was, it unintelligible. She hurried out of the room and ran upstairs. She could not bear it any longer.

MRS. PETHWICK sat and preened herself in her armchair. Her ingenuity had been successful. The same diabolical malice which enabled her to think of those things to say to her husband which hurt most had served its purpose to perfection here. Naturally she had not been as clever as she thought she was; it had had not been nearly as ingenious an invention as she believed it to be. It was not hard to guess that her husband let his new love know somehow or other that he did not love his wife and if he had told her, the most convenient way of hurting her would be to tell her the opposite, convincingly. Mrs. Pethwick, smoothing down her frock over her swollen thighs, knew that it had been convincing enough.

There have been tortures and torments recounted in all the literature of the world, but perhaps there has never been anything as bad as the torment Dorothy suffered that afternoon. The doorbell rang as she paced the floor of her room. She heard Beatrice bring in another caller. She had to go downstairs again. She had to greet her visitors, and pour out tea, and talk lightly, despite the pain that tore her heart-strings.

The other guests were mildly surprised and a little contemptuous at finding Mrs. Pethwick there, but she did not try to enter into their conversation. While they talked and gossiped gaily to each other, and to Dorothy, Mrs. Pethwick sat in her corner and smoothed down her frock.

Mr. Laxton came in towards the end and talked with the usual boisterous good humour which constituted his social manner towards his inferiors. It was only Dorothy, distractedly pouring out tea, who felt the oppression of the presence of the woman in the corner who said nothing.

And when the last of them had gone, Dorothy was able to tear herself free from her father on the plea of a headache—she who had never made that Victorian excuse before in her life! Up in the sanctuary of her bedroom she could not lie down, nor sit down. She could only walk up and down, up and down, in the alley-way between the bed and the wardrobe. The pain of it all was unbearable.

Even if he had not lied about it, even if he really loved her, Mrs. Pethwick's condition left Dorothy's hands tied. The dreams of a golden future in which she had been indulging would never come to fruition. She could not take away the husband of a woman who had a little tiny baby. (And expressing it in those words

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made the pain worse than ever.) A man had to stand by his wife in those circumstances, come what might. And Pethwick's child (the pain became worse still), Pethwick's child must not be abandoned to the sole guardianship of Mrs. Pethwick. No one could be so heartless. Pethwick would make a good father.

Then she remembered anew that she hated him. She remembered the smell of stale drink and stale sweat which had reached her nostrils when she had put Mrs. Pethwick to bed. How could Pethwick bear to embrace that woman? Or kiss her? Or after kissing that woman, how could he come straight from her arms to Dorothy's kisses? Dorothy's feeling of nausea nearly overcame her at the thought of it. As the paroxysm passed she found herself trying to reason again, telling herself that he was a married man, and that men are insensitive about such things—and with that her thoughts proceeded to describe once more the full circle they had already followed.

Somebody banged on the door.

"Dinner's ready," said the voice of Henry Laxton, junior.

"Go to Hell," said Dorothy. She heard a surprised Henry go clumping down the stairs again, and her thoughts raced off once more along the path of pain.

Then came another knock.

"Dorothy, Father says—"

"Tell Father to go to Hell too."

They left her in peace after that—or that is how the male Laxtons would have described it, not knowing what was going on in that bedroom.

It was not until very much later, not until hours of dry-eyed agony had elapsed, that tears came to the rescue and provided a safety valve. Dorothy had not wept for years; she had long ago decided that the prevailing belief that women weep more readily than men was a myth of the same class as the belief that women are bigger talkers or worse motor-drivers or less original thinkers than men. Be that as it might, Dorothy wept bitterly; which implied that soon she was weeping from wounded pride and because of her feeling of humiliation just as much as from her sorrow. In the end Dorothy did something which she had not believed, since she left off reading schoolgirl literature, to be possible. She cried herself to sleep.

IN THE morning her pride was reestablished. It had been wounded by the thought that she had shared a man's kisses with a woman who did not clean her teeth; it had been wounded by her discovery that the veneer of easy going tolerance about men and women which she had acquired at Oxford was only a veneer; it had been wounded by her discovery that she could feel so deeply about a man who was obviously worthless. But on account, presumably, of these woundings, her pride was up in arms, more evident even than usual.

The pain was gone; all that remained was a slight dull ache, as though a tooth which had been causing agonizing pain had been drawn and the jaw had not yet quite healed—an analogy which was completed by the sensation of something missing which she experienced every few seconds; something gone from her life.

Dorothy had eaten no tea and no dinner the night before. She completed a twenty-four hours' fast by eating no breakfast and no lunch before she set out, after school hours, to pay back some of the hurts she had received.

She walked across the High Street and slowly down Verulam Road. At the end of the Verulam Road she turned and walked very fast back to the High Street, and when she reached the High Street she turned again and walked very slowly back down the Verulam Road. It was not the first time she had done this. She had done the same for interviews 5 and 6, because Dr. Pethwick on his way home from the Liverpool School walked down Verulam Road from the High Street, and by adjusting matters carefully Dorothy could contrive that he overtook her and that their meeting might appear accidental.

Today when she reached the High Street corner for the third time she saw him picking his way in his usual sleepy manner through the traffic, and she had only walked twenty yards back along Verulam Road when she heard his step close behind her.

"I was wondering if I should see you," said Dr. Pethwick, altering his shambling step to suit her.

His mild grey eyes were bright with pleasure.

"Oh," said Dorothy, and several seconds elapsed before she continued, "I didn't want to see you. I was hoping I would not."

Pethwick could not, later, have said what actual words Dorothy had spoken. The tone she used sufficed to serve the purpose. He knew that fate had come upon him.

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"But perhaps it is as well," said Dorothy, that I *have* seen you. Because now I can tell you that I never want to see you again."

A suburban street is emphatically not the place for a lovers' quarrel. When walking side by side it is hard for one to see the expression on the other's face. There is too much limitation upon words and gestures. Misunderstandings are easy and explanations are difficult. But more than that, there is a drabness about the atmosphere, a monotony about the surroundings, which accentuate the misery of the quarrel.

The grievances of the aggrieved party seem somehow deeper, and the dreary pavements and dull horses rob the other party of his good spirits and optimism so that he can do little to heal the breach. The surroundings certainly played their part in Dorothy's mental attitude. They brought home to her what she had been doing. She had been indulging in a vulgar intrigue with a secondary schoolmaster, kissing him in a shabby little two-bedroom house with plush furniture. She wondered how she could have fallen so low after she had had four years in Oxford, when the beauties of the Dolomites and of Amalfi were familiar to her, and when her mind was filled with beautiful ideas.

She was disgusted with herself, and she told herself that her two years of housekeeping in this suburb must have mildewed her. She had forgotten all the glorious pity that once moved her, and certainly she had forgotten the fact that she had once even admired the man at her side. She was merciless now.

"You don't seem very surprised at what I am saying," she said.

"No," said Pethwick.

He was not. It did not surprise him that a Lordly One should dismiss him from her presence. The only wonder was that she had borne with him so long.

"Oh, what did you *do* it for?" asked Dorothy with exasperation. "You knew all the time it couldn't last."

"I suppose it couldn't," said Pethwick.

At this point Dorothy was brought up against the realization that if she blamed it all on Pethwick, which was the point to which the conversation was tending, she left herself the appearance of the weak-willed and gullible person she was determined not to be. She was determined to hurt.

"You're a liar and a coward," she said, viciously.

Pethwick winced at that. He could accept dismissal as something inevitable, like falling down when learning to skate, but even a low-spirited professor of mathematics can feel hurt when he is called a liar and a coward. Pethwick was hurt far too deeply to make any reply. He could only open and shut his mouth. Dorothy went on to pour venom into the wounds she had laid open.

"I wouldn't have hated you for being a coward," she said. "I thought all along that's what you were. But that you should lie to me. Me! You cur!"

Dorothy had never uttered the word "cur" before in her life, although she had read it in books. But such was the intensity of her feelings that the word came out perfectly naturally—as naturally as the heroine of a melodrama would say it. Dorothy was not feeing melodramatic. She was being it, instead.

Pethwick was out of his depth by this time. He did not know and could not imagine what it was that he was being accused of. If he had said so; if Dorothy's vicious attack had only made him lose his temper, there was still a chance for them both. But he was hampered by his feeling of respect; he could not bring himself to combat Dorothy's decision.

"You haven't made a fool of me, the way you thought you would," said Dorothy. "And I could make you sorry, too, but I won't. I'm not going to that much trouble, you poor fool, you. I shan't ever see you again. I'm going to Norway with Father this holiday."

BY NOW they had reached the corner of Launceton Avenue, and Pethwick stopped automatically. He had said goodbye to Dorothy at this corner five times. He stood looking down at her, his features twitching with the pain she had caused him. Dorothy met his eyes once, and then looked away again. Her latent sense of justice prompted her to say all she could for him.

"I thought better of you once," she said, and with that she left him, standing there with his papers under his arm, and his shoulders bowed, while she hurried away, never once looking back. It was not until two or three minutes had elapsed that he turned towards his house, dragging his feet along the pavement like an old, old man.

If he had thought about it, he would have prayed that Mary was not going to be "difficult" on this evening of all eve-

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ning. But it was only when he was inside the door that he remembered Mary's existence, and Mary was not "difficult". Mary knew, with that diabolical intuition of hers, that her schemes had borne good fruit even as he crossed the threshold. She was sweetness itself at once, a better wife to him than she had been for years. Partly it was because she was pleased at her success, but partly it was with some obscure and indefinite motive impelling her to show him that she was worth more than all the Dorothys on earth. Or it may have been some lurking sense of good behaviour. She took his parcel from him and put it on the table, and stood by him while he dropped into a chair.

"Tired?" she asked gently.

"Yes," said Pethwick, under his breath.

"I'll bring your tea in for you here," said Mary, just as though it were her usual habit to make his tea for him.

She brought in the tray, and rested it on the piano-stool which she brought up conveniently close to his elbow. It was a tempting-looking tray, as tempting as her dulled mind could devise.

"Is there anything else you'd like?" she asked.

Pethwick roused himself to look at the tray.

"No, thank you, dear," he said, automatically.

"I'll pour you out a cup," said Mary and did so.

Pethwick stil sat vacantly in his chair.

"Be sure you drink it while it's hot," said Mary lightly. Then she went out on tiptoe.

In the end Pethwick drank it, not while it was hot, but before it was stone-cold, and he poured himself out another cup, feverishly, and drank that, too, and then a third. The habit of drinking tea was so much a part of his nature that even the present crisis could not quite suppress it. The tea did much towards quietening the turmoil of aimless thought in his mind. He began to think consecutively again, sitting there in the chair with the untasted food beside him.

Later, when Mary peeped in through the door, he was still sitting there, a little more upright than usual, staring through the wall at nothing at all. Mary's intuition kept her from breaking in upon his thoughts, and she shut the door again as gently as she could.

It was a full hour, all the same, before Pethwick was really conscious of more than the misery within him. In the beginning he was merely aware of a sense of loss, so acute that it is hard to describe. Just as a person in physical pain turns this way and that in the hope of relief, and all unavailingly, so every attitude his mind adopted was found impossible by reason of the agony of having lost Dorothy. More than that; of late—and especially during the last three days—his every thought had beeen influenced and coloured by the faint exhilarating prospect that one day Dorothy might be nearer to him. That was impossible now; she was eternally and immeasurably far away. He was brought up against this realization at every turn, and it added to his pain, because it was easy at first, in his early stupidity, to begin lines of thought which his mind had grown accustomed to—lines of thought which led towards Dorothy.

Mercifully, bewilderment came later and helped to neutralise the pain. He was able to bring himself at last to try and remember the things Dorothy had said to him, and to try and work out the reason for his dismissal. Here he was hampered by his humility. He naturally assumed that Dorothy, by virtue of her status as a Lordly One, had every right to dismiss him without explanation—without reason, for that matter. She was perfectly entitled, in his opinion, to hurt him as much as the whim took her.

The assumption, however, was not entirely satisfying. The scientific brain demanded examination of all other hypotheses before adhering to the most likely—and the scientific brain was at work, somewhere, beneath all the agony. Dorothy had called him a liar and a coward; Pethwick forced himself to consider this matter; in the same way a doctor might force himself to handle his own broken leg. If Dorothy had called him a liar it must be because he had told her something which she believed not to be true.

Pethwick went back in his mind examining his memory of what he had told her. He was biased. He could not bring himself to think that the things he sincerely believed in, the things he had felt to be true, or had known to be true, might be doubted by anybody. He ruled at once out of the argument, then, any question as to whether he loved her, or would always love her. The fact that he did not love his wife was so much of a fact, so solid and indisputable, that he only gave it the most fleeting moment's thought.

There were other matters on which his conscience pricked him a little—so little

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that until he began this examination he had been quite unaware of it. This disarmament business, for instance. He had not been as enthusiastic in the cause of the reduction of armaments as had Dorothy; his enthusiasm had been, if not the result of mere politeness, at least devoid of Dorothy's pure fanaticism.

Many of Dorothy's arguments had appeared far-fetched to his logical mind; he told himself guiltily that he would never have agreed with them so completely if it had not been Dorothy who had put them forward. He had been a liar for agreeing with her, and a coward for not stating his objections.

This evening Pethwick only worked as far forward as this point before the feeling of loss returned again in overwhelming force. Dorothy had been eminently successful in her aim of hurting him as much as she had been hurt; the weak point was that if Pethwick had been the kind of liar she thought he was he would never have suffered so much. As it was he suffered in the way a child suffers; he was plunged into bottomless misery. It seemed as if there were no hope or joy left on earth.

In fact, there seemed to be nothing on earth left to live for. The discovery of the Klein-Pethwick Effect was nothing when weighed in the scales against this present calamity. Pethwick would have contemplated death quite calmly had the idea presented itself to him. But he was not of the impulsive kind which tends toward suicide. And by a curious association of ideas as soon as he realized that he was both unhappy and tired, he began automatically to go to bed. He had gone to bed unhappy so often before.

As ever, the routine of tooth-cleaning and hand-washing did much to calm his mind. He crept into the bedroom as he had done so often before, and got ready for bed in the dark room, lit only by such light as crept in through the windows from the street lamps outside.

CHAPTER IV

THE chaos attendant upon the end of the scholastic year had descended upon the Liverpool School. The Sixth Formers who had just endured their Matriculation examination and were going to leave idled wantonly about the school, beyond all control. The middle forms had recovered from their school examination and were delighting in the freedom from supervision which they enjoyed while the harassed staff were marking papers and preparing reports. The junior forms were wild with excitement at the near approach of the holidays; they were drunk with sunshine and restless in confinement.

The commonroom was always full of irritated masters with piles of unfinished reports before them, trying hard to think of five-word remarks (about small boys whom they only knew vaguely) which had not been used before, would express politely what they thought and yet not irritate parents unduly, and which would impress the headmaster with their keenness of observation and painstaking understanding.

The headmaster himself was harassed with the suspense of awaiting the report of the Board of Education, and the results of the public examinations; he had to find jobs for half the boys who were leaving; he had to fill up vacancies on the staff, he had to keep his eye on the financial situation as presented to him by the School Secretary, and he had to face a drop in numbers due to the new entries being fewer than the departures.

James E. Sorrels*

has switched to Calvert because Calvert makes a lighter highball.

*of 1015 S. Rosemont, Dallas, Texas

CALVERT RESERVE Blended Whiskey—86.8 Proof—65% Grain Neutral Spirits. Calvert Distillers Corp., New York City

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Dr. Pethwick moved through all this turmoil like a being in another world. He had quite forgotten to worry about whether the Matriculation results would justify the Governors in continuing to pay him the large salary which he drew. He blandly ignored the riotous high spirits of the forms he had to teach. The most ingenious tricks played by Horne and Hawkins and their imitators failed to penetrate through the indifference with which he regarded them.

He went through the report-writing business completely unmoved. Having made up, or remembered from last year, thirty remarks which could be used on reports, he used these thirty for every form on which he had to report, in the arbitrary order in which he first thought of them, so that many boys that year had remarks made upon their progress in mathematics or physics which depended solely upon their alphabetical order. It was as good a way as most others, and the mechanical writing down helped to keep his nervous condition nearer normal.

Unlike any of the other staff, he contrived to have time for thinking. The forms he was supposed to be controlling did exactly what they liked—and what that was would take too long to tell—while he brooded over his trouble. He did not even notice the nagging of his wife, which had started again coincident with her beginning to drink once more. He was developing a fixed idea. The muddle of thought in his mind was beginning to straighten itself out, with pathetic inaccuracy of direction.

The basic necessity under which he believed himself to labour was to prove to Dorothy Laxton that he was not a coward and that he was an ardent advocate of the reduction of armaments. At least, he believed himself to be a coward, but wanted to prove to Dorothy that he was willing to dare all that a brave man might dare. And if, even now, he felt he was not quite such a pure fanatic on the subject of disarmament as was Dorothy, he was set upon wringing disarmament from a reluctant world and then bearing it to her as a trophy.

Such was his urgent, terrible determination to bring this about that he was soon distinguishable from the ordinary fanatic only by taking account of the steps in which he had arrived at that state of mind.

It is possible that if it had not been for the nearly simultaneous discovery of the Klein-Pethwick Effect his fanaticism might have found expression in the more usual channels. It is possible—inconceivable though it appears—that Pethwick might have become one more of the pathetic folk who try to further various causes by walking through the streets bearing posters with printed messages, or who speak from soap boxes at street corners, and who run the gauntlet of hecklers in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons.

It is possible, though hardly probable. Pethwick was not a man of words, and, self-contradictory as it appears, a scientist is essentially a man of action. The problems presented to him are of necessity problems which can only be solved by action rather than by debate. The first impulse of the scientist with something to be done is to do something, whether it be expansion of a mathematical formula, or testing a hypothesis at the experimental bench. There is never any doubt in his mind whether he should break into action; the occasional difficulty only is how he should.

The spectacled absentminded professor beloved of the comic journals, who boils his watch and times it with an egg in his hand, may even in actuality do that sort of thing in his private life. But in his laboratory or at his desk he may be as brimful of action and daring and vigor as ever was Nelson at the Nile or a financier in the City.

So that Pethwick, now that his attention was diverted from a scientific problem to a social one, sought for a way in which to get into action, and in the Klein-Pethwick Effect he found the means ready to his hand. He was extraordinarily glad that he had not yet published his results. He was aware of his own deficiencies; he knew that his ignorance of a good many of the practical details of ordinary affairs was a serious matter, but that did not deter him. He looked upon himself in this matter as a piece of apparatus which he had to employ for lack of anything better. Any scientist worth his salt will struggle through with makeshift apparatus whose very weaknesses can be forced to serve the end in view, as Faraday and Darwin demonstrated.

On the last day of term, when school was over, a taxicab was being loaded up outside the Headmaster's house, beside the Liverpool School. There were trunks and suitcases, and fishing-rods and guns and cameras, all the impedimenta of a holiday party in Norway. Then came Miss

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Dorothy Laxton, and seated herself in the cab. She was the advanced guard of the expedition. Her duty was to convey herself and the baggage to Norway by the ordinary steamer route—her father was proud of the fact that she could be relied upon to do so efficiently. He was to follow later, after the final meeting of the Governors; travelling by air via Oslo he would reach the rendezvous almost as soon as she did. Henry Laxton junior would follow later still, when the Officers' Training Corps camp was over.

As Dorothy got into the cab, a tall bowed figure came walking past the house on the opposite side of the road. This was Dr. Pethwick. He carried a heavy suitcase which he set down on the ground at sight of Dorothy. Dorothy caught sight of him standing there staring across at her, and she started guiltily. For a moment a wild thought came into her head of running across to him, of saying something to him, no matter what, which might make amends for her cruelty of a week before. But she put the idea aside. Really sufficient time had not elapsed for repentance, and her father and Henry were at the door of the cab, and the driver had just started the engine running.

"King's Cross, sir? Right, sir," said the driver, and let in his clutch.

The taxicab moved off and round the corner, just as Pethwick remembered to pull off his hat. Dorothy had one last glimpse of him standing there with his suitcase at his feet. Mr. Laxton, nodding to him across the road, wondered vaguely for a moment what old Pethwick was taking away with him from school in that battered old suitcase, but he did not think about it for long. Old Pethwick was harmless enough.

ON HIS arrival at 41, Launceton Avenue, Dr. Pethwick carried the suitcase up to the spare bedroom. His wife was out at her mother's as usual, and he worked without interruption for a short while. The little bedroom contained an iron truckle bed without coverings, a deal chair and dressing-table, and a deal table—all that Mary, when they had furnished the house ten years ago, had deemed necessary to supply for the use of the possible guest who so far had never come.

Pethwick drew the table over to the window and laid out on it the various pieces of apparatus which he had brought from the school. They were not very complex nor excessively heavy. Two of the items were without the stamp of shop-made finish—they had been put together by Pethwick himself, and displayed all the clumsy efficiency of scientific experimental apparatus. Over these two instruments Pethwick bent with some little anxiety which was immediately relieved. The brittle gauge strips were unbroken; no damage had been done by their transport.

With his long careful fingers Pethwick began to set the apparatus together. He fished a few lengths of wire out of the suitcase to make his connections, and he took the electric lamp out of its socket and replaced it with a double plug from which two strands of flex could convey power. One he connected to his main circuit. The other he took over to the dressing-table across the room, on which he mounted the bit of apparatus which he had devised as a means to demonstrate in a lecture-room—if he ever were to do so—the Klein-Pethwick Effect. This was a simple little electro-magnet on a stand, a plain horseshoe of iron with a few turns of wire round it; under the poles, which pointed downward, was a little brass tray, and on the tray was a bit of iron. When Pethwick closed the switch the bit of iron instantly leaped up to the poles of the magnet and was held there.

Next Pethwick applied himself to the apparatus on the table. He made his final adjustments, stooping to read the Vernier gauge with care, and then he switched on the power. The make-and-break started its cheerful buzz, and instantly the bit of iron across the room fell from the magnet with a little clatter into the brass tray. Pethwick broke and renewed the circuit; the iron fell and rose, as often as he did so—a neat and obvious demonstration of how the magnetism of the magnet waxed and waned at his will, four yards away. Pethwick's apparatus had not suffered in transport.

Yet hardly was he assured of this when he heard a heavy step on the stair outside. Even if he had been given no other data, Pethwick could have told who it was by the manner in which the door was flung open. Mary made her entrance a full second, as her custom was, after the door had crashed against the wall.

"I *thought* you were doing something," said Mary, standing balancing on the threshold, her eyes traveling round the room.

"I heard you when I came in," went on Mary. "What's this you're doing?"

"An experiment," said Pethwick.

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"We don't want experiments in *this* house," said Mary. "A bedroom's not the place for experiments."

Pethwick did what he was about to do even if Mary had not come back then; he switched off his circuits, and began to dismantle his apparatus.

"Yes, I should if I were you," said Mary, when the sound of the make-and-break ceased and she guessed from his actions what he was doing. "You take all that stuff out of my house. You'll be blowing us all up or something."

To Mary, although she had been married for ten years to a doctor of science, the word "experiment" still connoted explosions and stenches; her standard of education was that of the comic strips. And the sight of her husband at work on something she could not understand outraged her possessive instinct and roused all her jealousy.

"I won't have that going on in my house," Mary reiterated. "You've never done it before."

To Mary's mind this last statement of hers was an argument.

"Very well, dear," said Pethwick. "I'll take it all away tomorrow."

"Where are you going to take it to?" demanded Mary, instantly.

Pethwick, stooping over his apparatus as he carefully disconnected the wiring, told his wife the first lie he had ever told her in his life.

"Back to school," he said.

Mary was not accustomed to catching out her husband in a lie. She noticed nothing odd about her husband's tone; anything unusual about it she attributed to his constrained attitude.

She pounced instead on his next misdemeanor.

"So *that's* where that suitcase went to," she said—Pethwick was packing the apparatus away by now. "You mind you bring it back again. It's not meant for things like that."

"Yes, dear," said Pethwick, as mildly as ever.

"Now come and have your tea," said Mary. "Keeping everything waiting like this."

Yet despite all these distractions it was on that evening that Pethwick matured his plan. He went over it again in his mind, considering every niggling detail. It was a very typical production of an overstrained mind, devised with the utmost care and attention; the only argument against it being that it was fundamentally unsound, like some marvellous system of arithmetic based upon the principle that two and two make five.

For all that, Pethwick's wits had been sharpened in some ways by his troubles. It is hard otherwise to understand how he could anticipate and prepare himself to encounter all the practical difficulties of his undertaking. The logical mind which could foresee those difficulties could not reasonably be expected otherwise to display the ingenuity to circumvent them.

NEXT morning, the first of the summer vacation, Pethwick set out from his house with his suitcase. He walked down Launceton Avenue to the corner, and from there to the High Street, but he did not go to the school, despite what he had said to Mary. He left his suitcase at the station cloakroom, and from there he went to the bank. At first sight this was a legitimate action enough, for he had his salary check to pay in—a month's salary in arrears and one in advance, sixty-five pounds in all. But when he handed over slip and check to the cashier he still lingered.

"What's my balance now?" he asked.

Two minutes later the cashier pushed a slip of paper across the counter to him.

"That's without including what you've just paid in, Dr. Pethwick," he said.

Pethwick unfolded the paper, and written on it were the figures "171 14 9." That was the only way Mary was reasonable—she did not insist on living up to their income, and did not trouble Pethwick about money as long as her very modest wants were satisfied and she was not bothered further. With the utmost deliberation Pethwick wrote a cheque and pushed it across.

"How will you have this?" asked the cashier, startled, when he had glanced at it.

"In one-pound notes," said Pethwick, very calmly.

The cashier handed over, almost reluctantly, a sheaf of fifty one-pound notes. He regarded Pethwick anxiously as he did so. Doctor Pethwick appeared by no means the most suitable person in the world to entrust with so much readily-disposable cash.

"Be careful with it," he said.

Pethwick nodded with a fine assumption of carelessness, and crammed the money into his breast-pocket. It was more than he had ever had on his person at one time before.

Outside the bank he boarded a bus which took him to the West End, and there he

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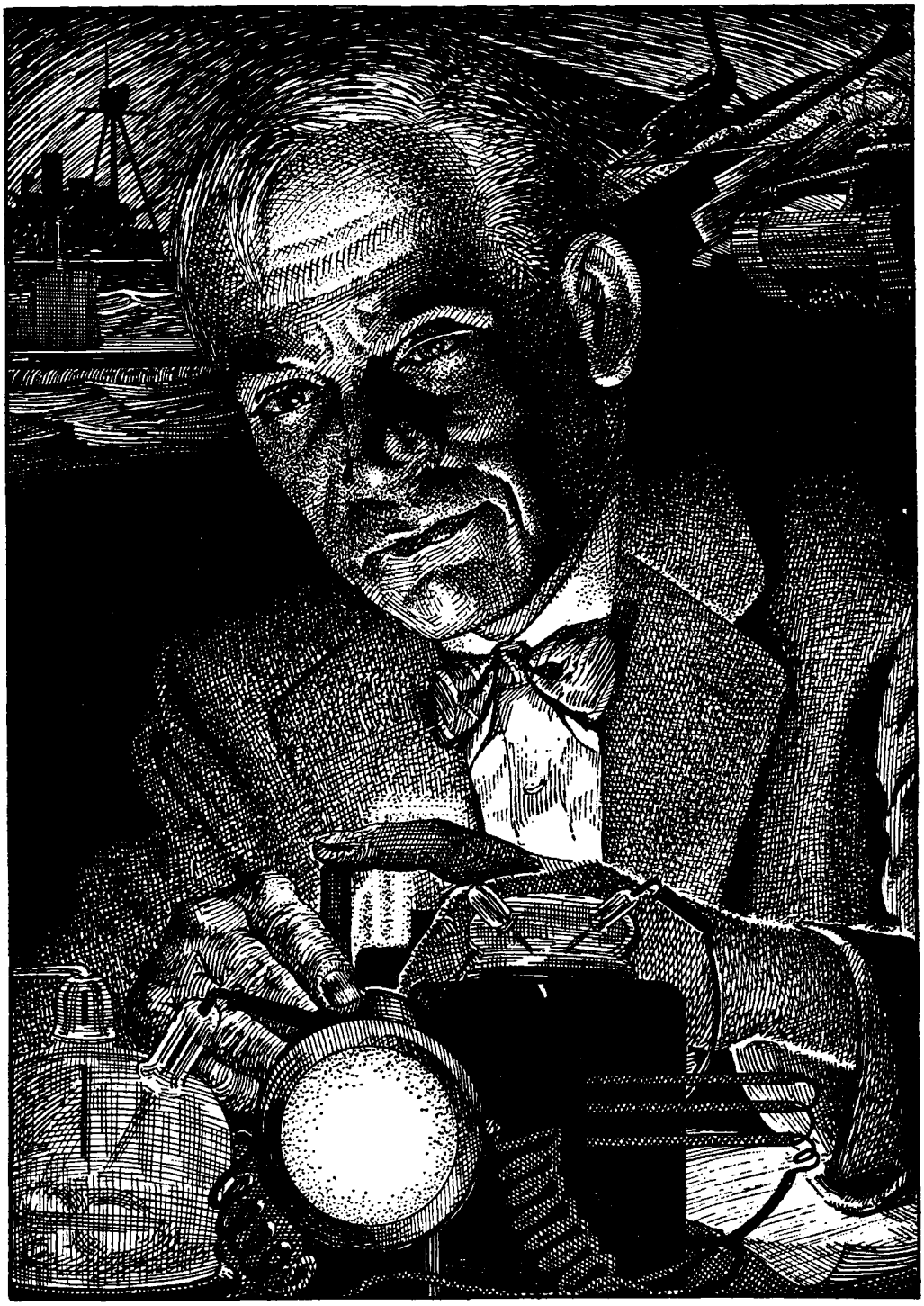

"Against my will no ship nor plane
nor tank shall move!"

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entered a men's outfitting store—the one whose advertisements even Doctor Pethwick had not been able to miss. For a moment he stood bewildered in the bustle of the entrance-hall; until now he had done all his shopping in small suburban shops and he was unprepared for this frightening reception. He stood just inside the revolving doors, tall and thin and shabby and drooping—save for his lack of spectacles a living example of the conventional idea of a scientific professor. He managed to find his way to the ready-made clothing department, and there a bright young man laid hold of him.

"Can I be any help, sir?" was what the young man said, as he had been trained to do.

"Yes," said Dr. Pethwick. "I want a suit."

The young man inclined eagerly towards him, and looked his expectancy of further details.

"A *good* suit," said Dr. Pethwick.

Then Pethwick realised that the only obstacle to his saying exactly what he wanted was his shyness, and he discarded that as soon as the realisation came to him because he was working towards an end which would not admit of shyness.

"And it's got to *look* a good suit," said Dr. Pethwick.

"Yes, sir," said the young man, meditatively, running his eye over Dr. Pethwick's figure. Then he plunged and went on. "At that rate I should have something in grey flannel, sir. Something of this sort."

He drew Dr. Pethwick over to a corner to where grey flannel suits in endless variety hung by hangers from a rail—suits of the most delicious shades of silver grey, grey with green chalk-mark squares, grey with white lines. It was a God-sent opportunity for the young man, because people who are going to buy twelve-guinea flannel suits do not usually wait until nearly August before buying; the young man was determined to clear off stock which was beginning to hang fire.

"Something like this," said the young man. "Double-breasted. With your figure, I should have white chalk lines. It'll look well. Let me take your measurements, sir, and we'll try one or two on."

A quarter of an hour later Dr. Pethwick stood in the mirrored dressing-room trying to recognize himself. Always before he had bought suits which were either navy blue or clerical grey—he had alternated from one to the other for fifteen years—because it had never occurred to him to do otherwise. He had never pictured himself in habiliments which he had mentally considered to be the prerogative of Lordly Ones. But now he was wearing a double-breasted pearl-grey suit which looked really well—the sort of suit people like governors wore on Sports Day.

The vertical white lines accentuated his height, the double-breasted coat accentuated his breadth, so that he looked twice the man he did in shabby blue serge. And the shop had substantiated its advertised boast to fit any figure in ten minutes. To Dr. Pethwick's untrained eye the cut of the suit was as good as anything Sir Dumbril Haydock, or Mr. Laxton ever wore.

"Yes, that will do quite well," said Dr. Pethwick, eyeing himself as steadily as he could manage. He looked with a considering gaze at the cheerful young man fluttering round him.

"Now I want everything to go with it," he went on. "Hat, shoes, shirt, everything."

"Yes, sir. I'll come with you, sir, and see about it."

Some of the advertisements had made a distinct impression on Dr. Pethwick's mind—advertisements which told stories of men with unexpected wedding invitations, or who had met with motor-car accidents on the way to important interviews; these men had despairingly called in at the shop and had been instantly outfitted afresh all ready for whatever it was they were going to do. Dr. Pethwick wanted the same done by him, and, sure enough, it was.

The bright young man took him to a myriad counters, and summoned a myriad other bright young men to attend to them. Here they bought a hat, and there they bought shoes. The bright young man did most of the selecting, and if it were the expensive things which he chose, with an eye to his commission, he also did his honest best to outfit Dr. Pethwick like a gentleman. A coloured handkerchief for his breast-pocket, a tie of the right shade, wash-leather gloves, silver-mounted cane, a shirt and collar—all these were bought and sent up to the dressing-room to await Dr. Pethwick's pleasure.

Dr. Pethwick left it all to him. He did not think it worth while to protest when the young man brought him braces and underclothes. No one was going to see his underclothes, and the solid leather braces he had had since boyhood were good enough for him, but he had asked to be supplied with everything and he was not

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going to draw back now. So, he bought braces of a magnificence of which he had never conceived before, and sock suspenders to match, and silk underclothing, and gold sleeve-links—severe but magnificent.

BACK in the ready-made clothing department the bright young man made a hasty abstract of the innumerable bills which had collected there.

"Thirty pounds four and sevenpence, sir," said the bright young man.

Without a tremor Dr. Pethwick produced his sheaf of notes and counted out thirty-one of them.

"You want to put these clothes on now, sir, I suppose?" said the bright young man.

"Yes."

"Very good, sir. I'll call the valet. And where am I to send the old ones?"

It says much for Dr. Pethwick's determination that he faced a double crisis like this without flinching. He accepted the fact of the valet unmoved; with regard to the need for keeping Mary unaware of his new purchases he said, casually:

"No, I'll take them with me. I suppose I shall want a suitcase. Have one sent up and packed for me."

"Yes, sir," said the bright young man; five seconds later Dr. Pethwick was in the mirrored dressing-room again and yet another bright young man, with sleek hair, all teeth and smiles and handwashing, was helping him to dress. He was a model valet; he took the ragged shirt and the deplorable woollen undervest as if they were royal robes, and laid them reverently aside before proffering to Dr. Pethwick the silk underclothes. He knelt to adjust the new sock suspenders until they were exactly right. He saw to it that the marvellous braces were of the right length to set off the line of the trousers. He put the sleeve-links into the shirt, and he said "Allow me, sir," and with two dexterous touches he repaired the hopeless hash Dr. Pethwick had made of tying the new tie.

He whipped a shoehorn out of his hip-pocket and gently eased Dr. Pethwick's feet into the new shoes. He helped Dr. Pethwick into the double-breasted coat and walked round and round him, unobtrusively, twitching it until it sat exactly right. When Dr. Pethwick dubiously put on the new felt hat with the snap brim he said "Allow me, sir" again, and cocked it just a shade over Dr. Pethwick's right eyebrow and snapped the brim down to the perfect slope.

Dr. Pethwick, looking in the mirror, saw himself wearing a hat as he knew it ought to be worn but in a way he had never dared—at the angle which indicated independence of mind without rakishness, gentlemanliness without formality. He had never had any idea that he could look so well. He fumbled with the yellow gloves, and, on the valet's suggestion, decided to carry them. Hat on head, gloves and cane in hand, he was ready for the street. He paid yet one more bill—for his new suitcase—and took a last glance at himself in the mirror.

The valet picked up the suitcase and fixed him with a glittering eye. He must have been skilled in thought transference, for Pethwick understood him instantly, and handed over a half-crown tip. Then they went down together in the lift and out to the front door.

"Taxi, sir?" said the valet.

"Yes," said Pethwick. He had never been in a taxi in his life before, poor man, but time was passing rather fast and he still had much to do. A taxicab came up at the valet's summons.

"Where to, sir?" asked the valet.

"Oh, tell him—just tell him to drive towards the City."

A few minutes later the taxicab whirled round the merry riot of Piccadilly Circus en route for Leicester Square, the Strand, Fleet Street, and the City.

At the Bank of England the taxicab drew up.

"This is the 'eart and centre of the City," said the driver. "Where do you want to go now?"

"This will do," said Dr. Pethwick.

He paid the driver, guessing wildly at what sort of tip was expected of him. By a stroke of genius he remembered that by leaving the suitcase in the cloakroom of the Bank Underground station he could avoid having to carry it around with him, and, that done, he set out to look for a City office for himself.

Among the black coats and quiet grey suits of the hurrying herds on the pavement the beautiful pearl-grey suit stood out in astonishing contrast. Pethwick himself, conscious for the first time in his life of being irreproachably dressed, walked slowly along Threadneedle Street. He held his head high; he walked with dignity, the silver-mounted cane tapping the pavement. Save for a certain intellectual quality about his face and the abstraction of his expression, he would have passed anywhere as a young man about town. Yet this consciousness of well-being, this new

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certainty of himself, did not alleviate his sorrow after his lost Dorothy, nor did it blunt the singleness of purpose which now consumed him. If anything, it only intensified them.

His steps took him into the backwaters and alley-ways off the main City streets. It would be there, if anywhere, that he would find what he sought. Sure enough, he found it. In Hammer Court there was a board displayed: "Light offices to let. Rents from 50. Apply caretaker." Pethwick regarded the building with a thoughtful eye. He walked out to the entrance of the court, and took special note of the volume of traffic in the streets outside. He gauged the distance from the intersection of roads to the court. Then, crossing his Rubicon, he turned and plunged into the block of offices.

It took a moment or two for his eyes to grow accustomed to the gloom after the blinding sunlight outside, but at last he was able to read on the half-empty address-board in the hall that the caretaker lived on the lower ground floor. He went down the stairs and rang the bell. The door was opened by a decayed woman in black, who eyed the radiant vision in silver-grey with dumb amazement.

"I am looking for an office," said Dr. Pethwick.

"'Oos office?" asked the caretaker.

"I am looking for an office for myself. I want to rent one," explained Dr. Pethwick, patiently.

"Oh," said the caretaker. It became apparent that she held in her hand some dubious sort of cloth—dishcloth or floor-cloth. She dropped this behind the door, and reached down a bunch of keys from a hook beside her.

"'Ow big?" said the caretaker, shutting the door behind her and setting herself to plod up the stairs.

"There's one on the ground floor. Suite of five rooms. Six 'undred pounds a year. One on the first, four 'undred. Two small ones on the second, two 'undred."

"Oh, I don't want anything like that," said Dr. Pethwick, alarmed. "Your board outside said fifty pounds a year. I only want a little office. Just a room."

"Ho," said the caretaker, stopping abruptly in her upward course. "There's only one like that, and that's downstairs along o' me. D'you want to see it?"

"If you please," said Dr. Pethwick.

The caretaker came flat-footed down the stairs again, Pethwick behind her. She unlocked a door and threw it open.

"There you are," she said. "Fifty pounds a year. Yearly agreement. Wired for telephone. Electric light. No central 'eating—it doesn't get down as far as here."

PETHWICK entered the room, and looked round it. It was as dark as a cellar—which is really what it was—and was some ten feet square. Two windows admitted practically no light and made no promise of air. The caretaker switched on the light, revealing the bare cement walls and floor. But the room was all that Pethwick desired.

"I'll take it," he said.

He sought for his pocket-book, but his hope that the transaction might be completed then and there was dashed to the ground.

"Agents are Truman and Todd in Fetter Lane," said the caretaker woodenly. "You'll 'ave to settle it with them."

"Very well," said Pethwick. After all, it was for the purpose of being able to encounter agents that he had gone to all the trouble of buying these fine new clothes. "I'll go along there now."

He came out of the room.

"The W.C.'s over there," said the caretaker, pointing. "Tenants are given a key."

"Thank you," said Pethwick.

Up in the sunshine again he called a taxicab. All this business had taken a little longer than he had calculated, and he was only now approaching the crucial moment of the day. A pretty girl clerk came up to him and when he pushed open the door and entered the office of Messrs. Truman and Todd. She smiled charmingly at him—or at the beautiful grey suit.

"I want to rent an office for which I believe you are the agents," explained Pethwick. "In Hammer Court."

"Oh, yes," said the pretty clerk. "Step this way."

Dr. Pethwick found himself led into the presence of Mr. Todd himself.

Mr. Todd ran a keenly appraising eye over Dr. Pethwick as he was ushered in. Much of the success of an estate agent depends on his ability to size up a man at the moment of introduction. Once more Dr. Pethwick laboriously stated his business.

"Hammer Court," said Mr. Todd, as though to himself. "Let me see. Which office do you wish to rent?"

"The one in the basement," said Dr. Pethwick. "The little one."

Mr. Todd looked at him more keenly still; it was not that in referring to the

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basement instead of to the "lower ground floor" Dr. Pethwick was violating estate agents' good taste, but that Mr. Todd could not help feeling dubious about people who could only afford fifty pounds a year office rent. There were such people—Mr. Todd was naturally quite sure of that—but there was bound to be something doubtful about them unless the contrary was quite obvious.

"What is the business you are proposing to carry on?" he asked.

Dr. Pethwick brought out his pocket-book, found a visiting card, and handed it over. It was one of fifty which he had had printed when he took his Doctorate, and he still had forty-five of them. Mr. Todd glanced at the card.

Dr. Edward Pethwick, D.S.C.
University of London

That was satisfactory, at any rate. It made it appear likely that this man could be identified by the aid of books of reference.

"By profession," said Dr. Pethwick, "I am a schoolmaster. I am the senior physics and mathematics master at the Liverpool School."

Mr. Todd nodded. That also could be checked up by reference. But it was a little odd that a schoolmaster should want a City office.

"I suppose it is obvious," went on Dr. Pethwick, "that I have never been in business before. In fact I have only recently decided on this step. But I have recently effected two patents covering physical processes which may be of some application in the arts."

"And you want to put them on the market?" said Mr. Todd.

"That's exactly right. Some years ago I had an unfortunate experience with a patent agent. It rendered valueless an earlier patent of mine, and I promised myself then that I should never have any more dealings with agents. You may have heard that patent-agents are all thieves."

Dr. Pethwick smiled. He told his lies in his simplest manner. It did not matter if Mr. Todd thought him a fool, as long as he did not think him a rogue. And Mr. Todd did not think him a rogue, nor even a fool. He was quite impressed by Dr. Pethwick's quiet assurance and by his manner when he repeated that remark which he had once overheard at a meeting of the British Association.

"I've no hope of making my fortune from these patents," continued Dr. Pethwick, modestly, "but it is really very possible that something quite good may come of them. It is becoming necessary that I should have headquarters somewhere in the City."

"I think we can arrange it," said Mr. Todd, and Dr. Pethwick saw success in sight. Mr. Todd pulled a printed form out of a drawer.

"Here is our usual form of agreement," he said. "I suppose you can give me references?"

Dr. Pethwick took the form and began to glance through it. He was deadly calm, and it was only when he was half-way through the reading that he answered Mr. Todd's question.

"I've been puzzling over this reference business," he said. "And really, I can't come to any conclusion. I've been a master at the Liverpool School for eleven years. I don't know anyone whom you could consider a satisfactory reference. I'm not sure—it isn't a matter of great importance, though—that the School would approve of my going into business."

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He smiled again at Mr. Todd, and then went on:

"But I understand that if I make sufficient payment in advance . . . ?"

Mr. Todd's expression, which had clouded over for a moment, cleared at once.

"Oh, yes, a year's rent in advance will be quite satisfactory—Mr. er—Dr. Pethwick."

"Then I may as well make out the cheque now?"

ALL THE trouble Dr. Pethwick had taken; his purchase of new clothes, his careful behaviour towards Mr. Todd had been solely directed towards the one end of gaining for himself a foothold free from observation in the City. When he had decided that he wanted one, he had been brought up short against the need for references. The Difficulty was surmounted now.

Pethwick, with the clarity of vision which had come to him with careful thinking, had foreseen that no agent would have let a City office to a shabby man who walked in without references and without a convincing story, however much advance rent he offered. But Mr. Todd, if he had been asked, would have said that Dr. Pethwick was a man of sound ideas who was likely to get on and who could be thoroughly relied upon—which was exactly the impression Dr. Pethwick had set out to convey.

Dr. Pethwick compelled himself to appear to read the agreement with care and attention. He picked his way through the crabbed estate agents' English, noting odd things such as the fact that he promised not to sleep nor suffer to sleep on the premises, and the extensive classification of the businesses he bound himself not to carry on there.

Mr. Todd unbent sufficiently to indulge in a little trivial conversation with Dr. Pethwick while the final details of the transaction were worked out. A touch on the button of Mr. Todd's buzzer brought in the pretty girl clerk to witness Dr. Pethwick's signature; a receipt was made out and stamped in exchange for the check for fifty pounds which Dr. Pethwick made out in favor of Mr. Todd.

"I'll send you on a copy of the agreement signed by our client, Dr. Pethwick," said Mr. Todd, in final valediction. "You can enter into occupation from that day."

And he ushered Dr. Pethwick out again. The interval of three days, as both Mr. Todd and Dr. Pethwick knew without mentioning the subject, would be employed in waiting to see that Dr. Pethwick's check was met and in making certain that there was such a person as Dr. Pethwick holding a doctor's degree in Science from the University of London and employed at the Liverpool School. Mr. Todd was quite easy in his mind about it already. He was sure, from what he had seen of Dr. Pethwick, that he would not be likely to make use of his tenancy of the office in Hammer Court for any of the lesser or dirtier criminal offenses, and no one would set out upon any of the greater swindles with headquarters in a single basement room.

Dr. Pethwick emerged into Fetter Lane a little dazed and fatigued. Now that the effort was over he began to feel the strain. Even the fact that he was wearing marvellous clothes meant nothing to him now.

He still had to make his way to the Tube station and collect his new suitcase. Then he had to engage a dressing-room in the men's lavatory at London Bridge Station—he had borne in mind the possibility of doing this when he made his plans a week ago—and change out of the fine suit and the silk underclothes back into the shabby blue serge and the ragged shirt and vest in which he had started out. The good clothes had to be crushed into the suitcase—Dr. Pethwick, despite all his abilities, was deplorably unable to pack—and the suitcase left at London Bridge Station cloakroom.

Then he remembered with a start that he had to buy yet another suitcase; he did this before getting into the train for home. At the suburban station he took the first suitcase out of the cloakroom, and made a discreet retirement in order to be able to transfer his apparatus to the new one, which he left deposited at the station. Then, with the old one, empty now, he at last reached 41, Launceton Avenue, very tired, but very satisfied, save in one respect. He had succeeded in everything; he had remembered everything—everything except his lunch. That had slipped his memory until he realized that part of his fatigue was due to hunger.

It was a pity Mary was at home, because that precluded him from satisfying his hunger until tea-time. Any excursion into the kitchen and clattering with crockery would have brought her out to see what was happening, and the spectacle of her husband eating at half-past three would have called not merely for unkind comments—Pethwick might have borne with those—but with questions about how he had spent his time so far that day. Peth-

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wick had tacitly allowed it to be understood that he had remained at school clearing up after the end of the scholastic year, and he did not feel equal to facing any acute examination on the point.

IT IS easy enough to work out the superficial reasons why the Pethwicks had not had a summer holiday away from home for so many years. There can be no doubt whatever that if they had decided upon such a holiday most of the trouble involved would have fallen to Mary's lot. It would have to have been she who decided where to go, and who booked the rooms, and who found out about trains, and who packed, and who saw to it that the trains were caught, and all that would have been a great trouble to her. She disliked the prospect of so much effort, and she also disliked the thought of being away from her favorite public-houses and cronies.

Pethwick, likewise, had equally cogent reasons for not wanting to go away. He shrank from having to face the comparative publicity of boarding-house life, and of being thrust into the society of people he did not know. He dreaded the fuss and bother of arrival and departure. Moreover, he liked to spend his holidays in catching up on the serious work of his life.

He delighted in spending his holidays in reading and in calculation; after all, it was only occasionally that Mary came to fret about seeing "a man always lounging about the house," and to chafe at the need —which she never really fulfilled—of having to provide a civilized lunch for seven days a week instead of one. Moreover, there were occasional meetings of learned societies which Pethwick liked to attend, unobtrusively. They were rare in August, but during the rest of Pethwick's holidays they were frequent enough to supply Mary both with an excuse not to take a holiday and with grounds for complaint.

So this summer holiday it was not remarkable that they should have done nothing about going away. During the opening days in July Mary pottered about the house in a dressing-gown complaining of the heat until it was time for her to go and see her mother, while Pethwick sat and read, or sat and thought, or sat at the table immersed in calculations.

Mary did not notice that on those early days of the summer holiday Pethwick spent an unusual proportion of his time in writing, and she did not notice what he wrote. And he was very careful when she was out of the house to burn all the discarded drafts—and they were very many indeed—of what he was writing, and to keep the latest current draft locked up in the central drawer of his desk, whose key was the only one remaining in Pethwick's possession. Mary only periodically had bouts of curiosity, but Pethwick judged it advisable to keep the document he was trying to compose safely out of her reach.

It took him three days to finish the thing he was writing—which, after all, was not too long to spend on a document which might alter the history of mankind—and it took him two hours, with Mary safely out of the way, to make a fair copy of it when it was completed. But that length of time is not a fair measure of the length of the document, for Pethwick copied it out not in his own minute legible handwriting, but in a disguised hand—in other words, he printed it in Roman capitals, for he had a vague memory of having read somewhere that that was the best way of disguising one's handwriting. And when it was finished he sought out a long envelope and placed the folded foolscap into it with care.

He stuck down the envelope, and began to address it—"The Editor, *The Times*." There he stopped short. He knew so little of the world that he had to go and find that day's issue and hunt through it in order to discover that *The Times* office is in Printing House Square, E.C. He stamped the envelope and locked it away again in his desk. He stood there thoughtfully, with the key in his hand, for a second or two.

Only incidentally was he thinking about the good that letter might do. More especially, he was thinking about his lost Dorothy, four hundred miles away from him across the sea. Pethwick surmised that *The Times* might penetrate even as far as the inner recesses of Norway, and when Dorothy read that letter she would know that it was he who had written it. Perhaps she would believe then that he was not a coward, nor a liar, and that even if he were not a rabid supporter of disarmament he was willing at least to imperil his future to bring it about.

Then Pethwick roused himself, and turned away from his desk to continue his period of waiting. When his wife came in she found him, just as she expected, sitting in an arm-chair with two books on his knees and two more on the floor beside him. It was as well that she was in an un-

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wontedly good temper, and so did not abuse him too violently for making that shabby room untidy.

Pethwick's period of waiting was not much further prolonged; it was in fact terminated the very next morning. He heard the postman's knock at the front door soon after he had awakened, with the morning sunshine in his eyes and his wife stirring sleepily beside him. As he had done on the two previous mornings as well, he slipped quietly out of bed and padded downstairs, barefooted and in his pyjamas to see what the postman had brought. He opened the long typewritten envelope expectantly, and the letter inside told him that he had achieved what he wanted. It began—*Dear Sir, With regard to your application for the tenancy of the lower ground floor office in Tranby House, Hammer Court, we have now heard from our client and have much pleasure in*—there followed the information that the office was now his for a year, that a copy of the agreement signed by the landlord was enclosed, and that the caretaker on the premises had been instructed to hand over to him the keys of the office.

Pethwick hurriedly buried the letter, agreement, and all, under a mass of odd papers in his desk, for he did not dare to go upstairs again for the key to the center drawer. It was fortunate that the postman had brought at the same time some of those circulars which flood the letter-box of an assistant schoolmaster who is also a doctor of science; they made it possible for Mary to believe that they were all he had brought.

PETHWICK could not but help feel a thrill of excitement at the near approach of action, but he would not allow himself to display it at all. At breakfast he read *The Times*, and after breakfast announced, quite casually, his intention of visiting the University of London library. He would not be home to lunch—he would take that meal at the A.B.C. restaurant at South Kensington. The only attention Mary paid to this announcement was to feel relieved at having him off her hands for the day. She might have been more interested if she had seen—as Pethwick took good care she did not—his lightning spring to his desk when she was out of the way, and his careful locking away of the newly-arrived agreement and his careful placing in his pocket of the stamped addressed quarto envelope containing the letter he had finished the day before.

Pethwick collected his two suitcases on his way to the office, and after a momentary hesitation he hired a dressing-room in the lavatory at London Bridge Station and changed into his beautiful new clothes. That was not really necessary, seeing that he was now the tenant of the office and nothing could unmake him.

It was a pleasant indication that he remained human; the most important motive influencing him was merely the desire to wear good clothes. The fine grey flannel suit had been badly crushed by Pethwick's packing; the snappy grey hat had lost some of its shape, and Dr. Pethwick was not as clever in putting on clothes as the valet who had previously attended him. The general effect, taking everything into consideration, was a caricature of the well-dressed man who had interviewed Mr. Todd and the caretaker. But Dr. Pethwick did not appreciate this. He walked out of the cloakroom with his two suitcases and hailed a taxicab, feeling quite pleased with himself, and that at least was so much gained. There had been precious little pleasure so far in Dr. Pethwick's life.

The caretaker actually contrived to raise a smile of welcome for Dr. Pethwick when he rang her bell on his arrival at Hammer Court. Yes, she had heard from Mr. Todd, and here were the keys. It almost seemed, as she walked across the corridor with Dr. Pethwick to open the office door for him, as if she had lost the secret devastating sorrow which had given her such an air of gloom when Dr. Pethwick had seen her last.

The caretaker threw open the door and Dr. Pethwick put down his heavy suitcase. Did Dr. Pethwick need tea in the afternoon? The caretaker was accustomed to supplying it to the other offices in the building. Messrs. Copley and Henfield, and the Cottage Supply Association, always dealt with her. Sixpence a head a week, she charged. Dr. Pethwick shook his head sadly. He was afraid he never drank tea—it was amazing how he had fallen into the habit of telling the most outrageous lies. But his secretary? Secretaries *always* wanted tea. Dr. Pethwick confessed that he had not yet engaged a secretary. When he had found one would be sufficient time to discuss the question of tea for her—and with that Dr. Pethwick had to decline, regretfully, the caretaker's eager offer to find him one.

And what about office furniture? Pethwick had difficulty at that moment in

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keeping the expression of his face unchanged. Until that moment he had forgotten all about the question of furnishing the office. For his own purposes he would need at least a table and a chair; for the sake of veri-similitude he would need a good deal more. Dr. Pethwick, so the caretaker said, would find all he wanted at Mr. George Freeman's round in Morton Yard. He dealt in second-hand office furniture, all good stuff.

Dr. Pethwick made a mental note of the name and address, and thanked the caretaker. This business of making history involved a tedious amount of detail in its preliminaries, but at last he was able to get rid of her, and shut his door, and look around the dingy room with the eye of a proprietor.

Mr. George Freeman was delighted to see Dr. Pethwick. In this time of slump more people came to him wishing to sell office furniture than to buy it. With his thumb in the arm-hole of his waistcoat he proceeded to supply Dr. Pethwick with everything necessary for the efficient running of an office—desks and tables and chairs and cupboard, and box-files and expanding files, and letter trays and waste-paper-baskets and calendars and ink-stands. He was a large red-faced man in a blue serge suit, and he almost carried Dr. Pethwick away on the current of his enthusiasm. But not quite, however.

Even Dr. Pethwick jibbed at buying a typewriter and a copying press. By some miracle he thought of an excuse for postponement; when he had engaged his secretary and could consult her whims on the subject would be time enough for buying typewriters. But Mr. Freeman sold him everything else. Dr. Pethwick wrote out a large check—he was growing used to doing this—and Mr. Freeman promised delivery of the goods that very afternoon.

On his way back to the office, to await their arrival, Dr. Pethwick stopped at a letter-box. He brought out the big quarto envelope from his pocket, and pushed it into the slot marked "For London and Places Abroad." The letter slid irrevocably down into the slot. Nothing that Dr. Pethwick could do could prevent it from being delivered some time that afternoon to the Editor of *The Times*.

Then he went back to the office, to pace up and down the stone floor of the bare room until the arrival of Mr. Freeman's van. It cannot be denied that in the matter of furnishing his office Dr. Pethwick did not play his part well. Mr. Freeman's henchmen demanded where this should be put, and that, and the replies they received were so vague and unconstructive that the workmen for the most part dumped down desks and chairs and tables and files wherever the whim took them—Dr. Pethwick had no idea how an office ought to be furnished and he could not compel himself to think about it and evolve ideas. There was no urgent necessity for him to play a part before these workmen, and he could not bring himself to do so.

But by the time the workmen had finished there was a realistic air about that office, all the same. Mr. Freeman had sold him enough office equipment to run a small government department, and when it was all in the room was crammed until there was hardly space to walk. It certainly looked as if a colossal amount of work was intended to be done there.

CHAPTER V

NEXT morning at breakfast Dr. Pethwick opened *The Times* with his nerves set and ready to keep his expression from changing. He turned over the pages rapidly, but on none of them was printed the long letter he had written with so much trouble to the Editor. Dr. Pethwick was by no means surprised. Somewhere in his intellectual makeup there still remained a residuum of cool judgment. He had guessed that *The Times* must receive every day from cranks and lunatics a collection of letters every bit as startling as his; he had fully anticipated that his letter would be classed with the others, and, if not put in the waste-paper-basket, at least put aside for later consideration. In point of fact, Dr. Pethwick had been quite sure this would happen, and had made all his arrangements accordingly. It was only now that his judgment had been proved correct that he looked back and thought he had not been quite sure—but that was like him.

Dr. Pethwick was elaborately casual after breakfast.

"I shall have to go to South Kensington again today," he said. "Do you mind, Mary?"

"Me?" said Mary with elaborate sarcasm. "Don't ask *me*. I don't count. Go if you like."

"Thank you," said Dr. Pethwick. "I'll be back to tea, I expect."

Dr. Pethwick went up to London in his shabby everyday clothes, but no sooner had he slipped into his office and locked

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the door behind him than he proceeded to change into the fine flannel suit, and the silk underclothes and all, taking them out with care from the cupboard into which he had locked them the night before. Donning those clothes had become like a priestly rite to him; he could not now contemplate action taken without that suit and those underclothes; they were like a priest's vestments or a knight's armor to him now.

Properly dressed, and his old clothes locked away in the cupboard, he proceeded to take the decisive steps. He felt no excitement about it; no additional tension. Decisive though the moment was, it was only one stage in the series of actions he had planned. Dr. Pethwick had the type of mind which will not draw back from an enterprise once begun, nor even contemplate retirement. From the moment when he had entered the Regent Street shop to buy his fine clothes it was as certain as anything can be on earth that he would proceed onwards to this moment and beyond.

The preliminaries took very little time. He unrolled a sheet of drawing-paper and pinned it on the office table. With a compass and a large-scale map of London he made a few simple measurements which resulted in the ruling of a line diagonally across the sheet—very strict accuracy was not essential, for he had a margin of possible error of at least ten per cent at his disposition. The table stood against the wall and to the wall Pethwick pinned another sheet of paper. He produced a crude form of sextant—a protractor and a pendulum made of thread with a weight attached. A further brief calculation resulted in his drawing a sloping line on the vertical paper.

That done, he began to set out on the table the electro-magnetic apparatus which he took from the second suitcase in the cupboard. With his long steady fingers he proceeded to make the electrical connections. He took the electric lamp out of its socket, and replaced it with the two-way plug. When finally the connections were complete he began to set the emitter carefully, first for horizontal direction along the pencil line on the table, and then for elevation along the line upon the wall. He ran his mild grey eyes over the apparatus, saw that everything was ready, and then with unhesitating fingers he pressed the switch.

At once the make-and-break began its cheerful chatter; Pethwick carefully turned the adjusting screw until the chatter died away into the merest, tiniest murmur.

The thing was done. The great demonstration was begun. All that Pethwick need do now was to sit down quietly and let history work itself out. Indeed, he tried to do so. He sat in the swivel chair which Mr. Freeman had sold him and tried to compose himself to while away the next six hours. But it was more than even Dr. Pethwick's nerves could stand. After no more than five minutes he found himself getting up from his chair and pacing about; and two minutes after that he took the smart grey hat and the snappy yellow gloves and went out of his office, leaving his apparatus still at work. He locked the door very carefully behind him.

AT THE time when Dr. Pethwick was engaged in putting his apparatus in running order at the Hammer Court office, Mr. Prodgers, a lorry driver, was engaged in driving his lorry containing two tons of cement in sacks to where the new offices were being erected in Finsbury Pavement. The traffic in the City had reached its morning peak. Buses, motor-cars, lorries, were jammed wheel to wheel in the streets. Progress was slow and difficult, and Mr. Prodgers, wrestling with his heavy wheel, had to carry in his mind a very clear mental picture of the length and width of the ponderous vehicle behind him as he wound his way through the press.

At one moment, although he found time to snarl at a drivar who was taking a chance " 'Ow long 'ave you 'ad your license, sonny? Two days?" he had no leisure to listen to the reply. There was a horse-drawn wagon in front of him, and Mr. Prodgers was keyed up waiting an opportunity of overhauling this anachronism and gaining a little elbow-room—keeping his four tons of lorry and cargo crawling at one and a half miles an hour was a strain even upon the experienced Mr. Prodgers.

But he was unlucky. As they reached the corner of King William Street and Cheapside, where all the traffic of the City converges, the policeman's white-sleeved arm went up almost under the horses' noses. The driver threw himself back upon the reins, and the horses stopped, slipping and plunging upon the glassy surface, while Mr. Prodgers behind him fell forward on clutch and brake and stopped his lorry neatly with the tip of the bonnet six inches behind the tail-board.

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Philosophically, Mr. Prodgers resigned himself to a long wait while the cross traffic was let through. He took the extinguished half cigarette from behind his ear, lit it, and filled his lungs comfortably with smoke, while all round him, beside him and behind him the checked stream of vehicles piled up against this check to its progress.

Mr. Prodgers smoked very much at his ease, surveying the rush and bustle of London life from his high perch in the lorry's cab. Then suddenly all ease departed, for a sudden cessation of vibration told him that his engine had stopped, and this unbelievable fact was confirmed by a glance at the oil-pressure gauge.

"'Ell!" said Mr. Prodgers.

He pressed his foot on the self-starter button. There was no response whatever.

"'Ell!" said Mr. Prodgers again. He opened his door, flung himself down to the ground, and jumped to the starting handle. If he was not ready to move on the instant the policeman dropped his arm he would be in trouble, and he knew it. He flung all his brawny weight upon the starting handle. He wound away with desperation, turning the heavy engine over as if it had been a baby car's, such was his panic. In this stifling heat the sweat poured in rivers down his face, but there was no response from the engine. As he wound at the handle he heard the clatter of hoofs. The cart in front was on the move—traffic was being let through.

"Bloody 'ell," said Mr. Prodgers.

He had half a minute left in which to get started, if he wanted to avoid prosecution for obstruction. In one last despairing effort he flung himself again at the starting handle, but unavailingly. There was no more life in that engine than there is in a sheep's carcass in a butcher's shop. He slowly straightened his back to wait philosophically the arrival of the policeman.

But when he stood upright and was at last able to take stock of his surroundings his eyes were rejoiced with a most unusual spectacle. In front of all the motor vehicles which had halted round him in King William Street there were men winding away wildly at the starting handles. Mr. Prodgers momentarily experienced the pleasure which comes of the discovery that one's misfortunes are shared by others; but the pleasure was immediately forgotten in surprise at the coincidence that a dozen motor vehicles in one place should strike work together.

Even as Mr. Prodgers began to marvel at this, realization came simultaneously to all those others winding starting handles. Everybody straightened themselves up and stared sheepishly at each other. Then some of them even laughed, but the laughter died away as the inevitable policeman came up.

"Nar then," said the constable. "Wot d'you think you're up to? Get a move on quick, or you'll be on the peg."

At that one or two of the fainter hearts, or those with bad traffic records, applied themselves—uselessly once more—to the starting handles. But Mr. Prodgers was of sterner stuff, and he understood that lorry of his far better than he understood his wife, for instance. He knew that if it refused to move it must be for some substantial reason.

"Nothing doing," he said, stoically. "Tike me nime and me number, and then call the brikedown van."

By the usual constabulary legerdemain pencil and notebook appeared like magic in the policeman's hands. Name and number were in process of being jotted down when the policeman's attention was diverted.

"Officer," said an indignant voice. "Officer. Something must have happened."

The policeman looked around and found at his elbow an indignant figure in the short-coated and high-hatted uniform of the Stock Exchange.

"Officer," said this individual, hurriedly doing his best to minimize the absurdity of his first obvious remark. "All these cars wouldn't stop like this all together if something hadn't happened. *My* car wouldn't break down."

A gesture of the stockbroker's hand indicated a long glittering black saloon a little farther back in the press, with a liveried chauffeur standing helplessly by the bonnet.

THERE were murmurs of agreement here and there among the other drivers. The policeman held his pencil suspended over his notebook for a moment, and then put them slowly away into his pocket.

"That's so," he said. "But we've got to get you out of the way quick, or there'll be hell to pay."

As if to accentuate his words there came from far down King William Street a despairing hooting as other drivers broke the law of the land in calling attention to the fact that they were being kept waiting.

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The policeman looked round him. In Cornhill and Cheapside and Queen Victoria Street and Moorgate Street there was a wild tangle of traffic. Everything—motor-cars, buses, and all—was held up by the traffic waiting to enter or emerge from King William Street.

The policeman knew by long experience that the results of even the slightest check to the rush hour traffic were likely to persist for a long time into the day. He foresaw himself being officially hauled over the coals for this business. The inevitable crowd was forming on the pavements; in the City of London the production of a policeman's notebook summons more men from the earth than ever did the dragon's teeth. He turned to the drivers.

"Get yourselves out of this if you can. Push yourselves out by 'and, can't you? Get over beyond the Bank. I'll fix it up with the officer on point duty."

From that moment the traffic arrangements of the City of London collapsed into chaos. All round the Bank of England people were pushing motor-cars. Despite the fact that the usual hundreds of people with nothing obvious to do all fell to and lent willing hands to help, the holding up of the cross traffic to let the crawling vehicles by crammed the streets for half a mile in every direction.

Mr. Prodgers, naturally, could not contemplate the pushing of four tons of lorry and cement by hand. He stood and marvelled instead, while he waited for the van the police had sent for to come and tow him away. But there was more and more to marvel at. When fifty broken-down motor-cars had been laboriously pushed by hand out of the Bank end of King William Street there came pouring up a flood of vehicles which had been waiting down at the London Bridge end.

Mr. Prodgers saw a light delivery van, the first of the stream, approaching from behind his lorry. Twenty yards back he suddenly saw it falter in its progress. Mr. Prodgers even noticed the change of expression on the driver's face. The van rolled forward, ever more slowly, until it came to a complete stop close to the lorry. Mr. Prodgers found a sardonic enjoyment in watching the driver do exactly what he himself had done, and two score other drivers as well—stretch out his foot for the self-starter button, and then, finding the self-starter out of action, hurriedly climb down and apply himself to the starting handle.

Other vans and buses came rolling up, and one and all stopped as they neared the end of King William Street. In fact, one minute after the street cleared, save for Mr. Prodgers' lorry, King William Street was tightly jammed again with helpless vehicles.

Mr. Prodgers sauntered across to the light van.

"It's no go, mate," he said to the still-winding driver.

"What d'you mean?" answered the driver, looking up at him.

"Look here," said Mr. Prodgers, dramatically, and the driver, following his gesture with his gaze, saw in that instant six other drivers pressing self-starter buttons or winding handles.

"Coo!" said the driver.

But the conversation was interrupted, because Mr. Prodgers saw the van which the police had sent for approaching from Cheapside, and he had to hurry away to welcome it. The driver of the breakdown van, escorted by a couple of policemen who held up the traffic, turned his bonnet towards the Bank of England, and then, getting into reverse, proceeded to back into King William Street into a position to tow Mr. Prodgers' lorry out.

Mr. Prodgers saw the back of the van approaching him; he saw the face of the driver peering backwards round the side. Then the breakdown van suddenly lurched and stopped. The driver withdrew his head abruptly, and Mr. Prodgers guessed he was pressing his self-starter. A second or two later Mr. Prodgers saw him emerge and jump round to the front of the van, and Mr. Prodgers instantly guessed that he must be turning his starting handle.

"It's something in the hair," said Mr. Prodgers to himself, half aloud. "It must be something in the hair."

Chaos ruled again. There were fifty policemen now assembled round the end of King William Street. There were two thousand spectators lining the pavement. Mr. Prodgers conferred with a police inspector and with the team of the breakdown lorry. Mr. Prodgers proudly enunciated his new theory of an atmospheric disturbance.

"Maybe so," said the inspector. "One of those cars which wouldn't go here went all right when they pushed it over into Cheapside. Didn't seem nothing wrong with it there. What do *you* think about it?"

This question was addressed to the driver of the light delivery van, who had been displaying prodigies of activity. He had whipped open his bonnet, had ascertained

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that the petrol was flowing properly, that the jet was not choked, that the carburetor was functioning, and had then turned his attention to the ignition. Shading his eyes with his hat from the strong sunlight he peered at the points of a sparking plug while his van boy turned the engine over.

"Not a glimmer. Nothing doing. Mag's gone scatty," said the van driver.

The experts from the breakdown van concurred.

"Mag. or no bloody mag.," said the inspector, Napoleonically, "I've got to get this bloody street clear. It'll take all the bloody day to get the bloody traffic running properly after this. This bloody jam" —he indicated the packed waiting vehicles in King William Street—"stretches from here over the bloody bridge all the way to St. George's bloody church."

The inspector turned away from the little group, his mind made up for him by this burst of eloquence.

"Here, Marvell," he said.

A sweating police sergeant turned towards him.

"Get down to the Monument," said the inspector. "Take six—no, ten—men with you. Divert everything there. Nothing more's to come up King William Street untill further orders. Stuff going west'll have to go up Cannon Street. Send everything else up Gracechurch Street. Get on with it."

Sergeant Marvell departed, the string of constables with him shouldering their way through the packed crowds.

"Anyway," continued the inspector to himself, "horses haven't got mags. Where's a telephone?"

It was by the aid of four horses sent up by a wondering police headquarters that in the end Mr. Prodgers' lorry was towed away.

Meanwhile, of course, an exasperated clerk of the works on duty at the place where the new offices were in the course of erection in Finsbury Pavement was cursing madly to himself at the non-arrival of the two tons of cement which Mr. Prodgers was supposed to bring up.

The suspension of the building on Finsbury Pavement was only one of the results of Dr. Pethwick's activities. Those results spread far and wide—the only satisfactory metaphor which can be employed is the old one of the ripples caused by throwing a stone into a pond. Because of what Dr. Pethwick had done, some hundreds of City men were late for their appointments, and even City men's appointments are of some value. Some hundreds of City messenger boys who stopped to see the fun were late in delivering their messages and those messages were presumably of some value, too. Goods which were urgently expected arrived late. There was delay and muddle and exasperation throughout the City.

And not only in the City, either. Far out in the suburbs, in Brixton and Homerton, wherever a motor-bus route penetrated after passing through the City, housewives waited in vain for the buses to arrive which would carry them home from their shopping expeditions, while the buses themselves were either laboriously towed to the company's repair depots or, jammed wheel to wheel in a never-ending queue, were crawling at the pace of a snail through the over-congested streets into which they had been diverted.

In hotels travellers with a train to catch waited in vain for their laundry. In restaurants cooks waited in vain for their chops and steaks. In magazine offices the printers waited in vain for the arrival of the advertisers' blocks. The City police worked overtime; City clerks whose win-

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dows overlooked the tumult did not work at all.

The whole activity of London—of England, in fact—was deranged by Dr. Pethwick's interference with the traffic. He had chosen his weapon well. Just as a slight pressure on the carotid artery will make a human being dizzy, so did Dr. Pethwick's pressure on an artery of the City cause equivalent trouble.

DR. PETHWICK had as a rule little taste for crowds. He was rarely moved by vulgar curiosity; he never dreamt of stopping to join the idle onlookers around a fallen horse or watching men working pneumatic drills. But on that August morning he joined the crowds who seethed round the end of King William Street. His tall lean figure in its elegant suit was to be seen there, making slow progress through the mob. Mr. Prodgers saw him, and the police inspector, but they naturally did not think their troubles were due to this individual who bore all the hallmarks of prosperity and neutrality.

Dr. Pethwick saw a good deal. He saw the breakdown van which had come to tow away Mr. Prodgers' lorry cease work when it came under the influence of the Klein-Pethwick Effect. He saw the stockbroker's car—which had coil ignition—start up again in response to a despairing trial by the chauffeur when it had been pushed beyond that influence into Cheapside. For with coil ignition the Klein-Pethwick Effect could only operate while the vehicle was actually in its range.

Once the car was removed, the soft iron core of the coil could once more be magnetized by the current from the accumulator circulating round it; a spark could once more pass, and the car could proceed as if nothing had happened. It was only those vehicles with magneto ignition which suffered permanent damage. In these cases the spark had to be produced by the rotation of a coil of wire in a magnetic field due to a permanent magnet, and when the permanent magnet had lost its magnetism the only way to get the vehicles into running order again was to take out the magneto and either remagnetize the magnet or—what was no dearer—replace the whole instrument with a new one. That was hard luck on the owners of motor vehicles with magneto ignition which came under the influence of the Klein-Pethwick Effect, but Dr. Pethwick felt no concern—at present, anyway—for cases of individual hardship.

Dr. Pethwick saw the banked-up traffic, and the convulsions that ensued upon trying to clear away the broken-down vehicles. He realized that his setting of his instrument had not been quite as accurate as it might have been. He had only barred King William Street traffic, and though this might cause a good deal of trouble, the trouble could be avoided to a large extent by diverting all traffic—as the police inspector now proposed to do—from the street.

Humanity is a good deal more educable than flies are, even though the recent history of humanity might make this seem improbable. A fly encountering a window pane will refuse to believe in the existence of a transparent substance impervious to flies, however forcibly the fact is demonstrated to him by the bumps his nose receives when he flies against the pane. It only took three bad jams at the mouth of King William Street to convince the authorities that for some reason which they could not imagine, and which they had never before encountered, King William Street was unsuitable that day for motor traffic. It was unfortunate for them that they reached this decision just when Dr. Pethwick was making his way back to Hammer Court through the crowds.

Hammer Court, when Dr. Pethwick reached it, appeared just the same as ever. It was quite unchanged by the fact that history was being made a hundred yards away. Dr. Pethwick strolled across the yard—his chest out a little under the influence of the double-breasted coat—and in through the door at the corner and down the dark staircase to his office.

He took the precaution of looking round before unlocking the door; it was just possible that someone might hear the buzz of the make-and-break when the door was open if he were standing near. Dr. Pethwick entered quickly and locked the door behind him; on the table the make-and-break was still buzzing in its low monotone—not nearly as noisy as the typewriters on the floor above—and the dull glow from the emitter was still evident.

Pethwick had guessed the cause of the slight error in laying his emitter. His compass did not indicate the exact magnetic north; even in a City office there must be a certain amount of deflection caused by iron piping in the walls and similar objects. But as he had reached a result by experiment there was no need for tedious correction, even if that were possible with the instruments at his disposition. A very

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brief calculation in solid trigonometry sufficed. Across the line on the paper on the table he drew another one, at a very slight angle. Then he rotated his emitter until the instrument was exactly parallel to the new line.

It certainly was not Mr. Prodgers' lucky day. He had reported the surprising misadventure which had overtaken his lorry to the clerk of the works at Finsbury Pavement, and now he was on his way back to the yard to bring up the reserve lorry—a prehistoric Ford which he hated—seated beside the driver of an empty lorry returning to refill.

They came out round the Bank of England from Princes Street; the police were diverting all traffic bound for London Bridge through Lombard Street and Gracechurch Street. But as the lorry came lumbering out into the open space on which the Duke of Wellington looks down with his sightless bronze eyes—the very point which a taxicab driver had once described to Dr. Pethwick as "the 'eart and center of the City"—the lorry slowed up abruptly, just as if someone had switched off the ignition.

"Gawd lumme!" said Mr. Prodgers. "We've got 'em again."

He put out a restraining hand and stopped his mate from precipitating himself down from the driver's cab to turn the starting handle.

"That's all right," said Mr. Prodgers. "There's plenty like us."

FROM their position of vantage, stationary midway in the triangle made by the Royal Exchange, the Bank of England, and the Mansion House, they had a clear view of all the streets which center upon the spot—Cheapside and Queen Victoria Street and Princes Street and Cornhill and Lombard Street and Threadneedle Street to say nothing of the now deserted King William Street. And wherever they turned their eyes, at each waiting queue of traffic in turn, there were people trying to start motor cars that obstinately refused to go. All round them, on the central crossing itself, there were other vehicles in the same condition.

Dr. Pethwick had laid his instruments correctly enough now. Where before he had merely been pressing on an artery, he now had checked the action of the heart. It would not be a matter of an hour or two; it would take all day and all night to clear up the difficulties so caused. The Klein-Pethwick Effect emerged from the emitter underground in Hammer Court in a cone of dispersion, and the conic section just above ground level outside the Royal Exchange was an ellipse something over a hundred yards along the major axis and something under that amount wide. Practically all the area covered by that ellipse —of a superficial area of some nine thousand square yards—was crammed with motor traffic.

The police were presented now with the problem of getting some two hundred broken-down motor vehicles out of the way. When they should have done that, they would next have to face a situation whereby every important road in the City of London was barred. All the precious half square mile centering round the Bank of England, where the freehold value of a single square foot of land is equal to a working man's income for a couple of years, was endangered by the complete cessation of all cross traffic.

Society from the days of the Romans at least had been dependent on ease of communication; within the last thirty years there had grown up a new dependence upon motor vehicles. Dr. Pethwick was injuring society at its most tender point.

He himself, however, at the moment, was not very immediately concerned about all this. He was occupied with writing a letter, seated at the typewriting table which Mr. Freeman had sold him, with his apparatus buzzing away at his elbow on the big table. He was writing with care, employing the same script of Roman capitals which he had used when he wrote his previous letter to the Editor of *The Times*. It took him a long time; perhaps a little more than two hours. When he had finished it, he folded it into a long envelope which he addressed as before and laid it aside. Then with one long slender finger he switched off the current, and by that single movement made life possible once more in the City of London.

He dismantled his apparatus, and locked it away again in the cupboard. He was about to take his hat and his letter and start out when he suddenly remembered that he was still wearing his beautiful suit; if he had not realized this he might have gone home and displayed himself in all his glory to Mary and so ruined all his plans. He changed his clothes hurriedly, grabbed his letter, and came out of Hammer Court, a shabby, rather insignificant man.

The streets seethed with people. There

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were harassed policemen everywhere, and there were broken-down motor-cars and buses parked along the kerbs in every street. Dr. Pethwick thought of posting his letter, made a rapid calculation of time and space, and decided on delivering it himself. He had not the remotest idea where Printing House Square might be, but by a piece of deduction which would have been surprising in him a fortnight ago he decided that it must be near Fleet Street, and so walked down Queen Victoria Street in that direction. New Bridge Street, too, was full of policemen, busily diverting the traffic which wished to go City-wards, warning all east-bound traffic to keep to Cannon Street and Fenchurch Street, and sending everything which aimed more north than that along the weary round through Aldersgate Street and Old Street.

A messenger boy told Dr. Pethwick where to find Printing House Square, and Dr. Pethwick with his own hand dropped his letter into the solid brass letter-box of *The Times*. When he came back into Queen Victoria Street he noticed the posters which the boys who sold the evening newspapers were displaying. The very sight of their wording sent a thrill through him; he felt a hot flush beneath his skin. "Amazing Traffic Scenes in City," said one. "Traffic Breakdown. What Experts Think," said another, while the third pinned its faith to a more generalized expression and merely announced "Sensation in City."

It illustrates the oddity of human nature that the sight of these contents bills should rouse Dr. Pethwick to excitement in the way it did, while he had been so little moved when with his own eyes he had seen the actual results of his actions. His hand trembled a little as he searched for a penny and bought a paper. There were flaring headlines right across the front page; half the remainder of the front page displayed a photograph taken of the traffic crossing in front of the Royal Exchange, showing horses busily engaged in pulling motor-buses out of the way.

Dr. Pethwick was so interested in reading all about it that he collied over and over again with people walking in the street.

The fifth collision was such a severe one that it shook him into a half-dazed condition; when he recovered he made himself put his paper in his pocket while he walked to the station.

ONCE in the train, he read with avidity. The newspaper he had bought happened to be the one which had displayed "What Experts Think" on its contents bill, and when Dr. Pethwick glanced down this column he realized what an amazing amount of balderdash experts think.

There was some excuse for them, of course. Half of them had been rung up on the telephone and had been asked for their opinion the moment they had been given a very inaccurate account of the facts. Most of the reporters had been misled by irrelevant details—because in a good many cases the drivers of vehicles under the influence of the Klein-Pethwick Effect had pressed their self-starter switches for an absurdly long time. And as the rotation of a starting motor depends on magnetism, the motors had refused to rotate, and in that case much heavier currents passed through the coils than passed when the motor was in motion, with the result that dynamotor coils were burnt out, and accumulator plates buckled, and the whole electrical apparatus of the motor-car ruined even in cases where, having coil ignition, the whole damage done might have been merely temporary if the drivers had used moderation.

These crumpled accumulator plates and burnt-out insulations had naturally claimed as much attention as, or even more than, any temporary difficulty with a spark coil, and excited newspaper men, pouring out on the telephone to bewildered scientists a whole mass of information, true and false, misleading and otherwise, had elicited the most amazing suggestions. By the time these suggestions had been scribbled down in shorthand by someone with no scientific knowledge whatever, transcribed by someone with even less, set up in type and proofread in a hurry by people whose ignorance of scientific terminology is proverbial, the result was extraordinary.

The great Norbury had given an opinion —of course; no scientific article in the evening press would be complete without Norbury—and had apparently hazarded a guess that atmospheric electricity might be the cause of the trouble. Presumably Norbury had said something about "Lightning, you know, is one result of atmospheric electricity," while trying to make himself clear over a defective telephone, and the result was that there was a cross-heading in the article to the effect that "Famous Scientist suggests Lightning as a Cause." On the other hand, Dodgson,

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the constructional engineer—who knew no more about electricity than a schoolboy—had come a little nearer the mark in the half-dozen wild shots he made when he suggested that perhaps someone experimenting with a new form of beam wireless was responsible for the damage.

The most honest opinion was given in the opening words of an interview with a prominent manufacturer of motor-cars, who began with: "I simply cannot understand it." It was inevitable, all the same, that he should go on with: "But as far as I can make out very few of our cars were affected."

In the crowded railway carriage there was actually a new topic of conversation to replace the discussion of the prevailing heat, which had done duty for three weeks now. Men were exchanging their impressions of the traffic block, and their theories of its cause—and most of these theories were no wilder than those put forward in the paper Dr. Pethwick held.

Dr. Pethwick found it all so exciting that he almost forgot to get out of the train when it arrived at his station; he just managed to precipitate himself down from the door, after treading on half a dozen feet on his way to it, just as the train began to move off again. The guard shouted at him; the porter looked at him disapprovingly; the people on the platform turned and stared. But for once in his life Dr. Pethwick was unmoved by publicity. He noticed none of it as, clutching his paper, he made his way to the station exit.

Dr. Pethwick retained enough of the keen practical sense which had carried him through so far to endeavor to make himself at least appear normal when he reached home. But Mary, even though, after a long day with her friends, she was not quite as perceptive as she might have been, could not help but notice something a little strange about him.

When he had finished his meal he plunged once more into re-reading the evening paper. And, now she came to think of it, his glances had strayed over to that paper several times during the meal—and yet the paper bore every sign of having been well read already. Later on, when he put it down at last, she was able to take possession of it and look through it herself. She could see nothing in it to account for this new manner.

For a moment she formed a theory that he might have drawn a big prize in a sweepstake, but there was nothing about sweepstakes, and no list of prize-winners.

"Did you see anything of this traffic jam they talk about here?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," said Pethwick. He was ready for anything now. "It held me up a bit when I was coming back across London."

"I suppose it wasn't nearly as bad as they say," sniffed Mary. "You can never believe anything you read in the papers nowadays."

"Oh, it was pretty bad," said Pethwick, calmly.

CHAPTER VI

DURING the night the newspapers had plenty of time to make up their minds about the City traffic jam. Whatever it was which had been holding up the traffic ended its activity some time later in the afternoon—some time after four o'clock. That was certain, for when a car-load of scientists obtained police permission to make experiments, and drove gaily into the road junction outside the Royal Exchange at twenty minutes past four they were sadly disappointed to find that their car did not stop, but travelled from Cheapside to Cornhill.

They were left lamenting, with no data to go on save what could be obtained by examination of the helpless cars which were by now distributed in repairing garages all round London.

One or two of the saner newspapers were able to produce quite a good analysis of the course of events. They were able to work out how the phenomenon had manifested itself first at the end of King William Street and, after persisting there for an hour and a half, from about 10 a.m. to 11:30, had suddenly shifted itself fifty yards into the main street junction.

After that, however, opinion was very sharply divided. To some minds the conclusion was obvious, that the trouble was due to a human agency, which had first made a bad shot before correcting its aim and settling down upon the most sensitive area (from a traffic point of view) in all London.

But other newspapers could not bring themselves to believe this. For one thing, they flinched from facing the important conclusion that if it were true some person or persons had London's traffic at their mercy. For another, they formed a muddled picture of what had happened.

The disjointed narratives of various eye-witnesses seemed to indicate a repeated shifting of the scene of the disturbance—over a small area, it is true, but a shifting

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all the same. These newspapers decided after much cogitation to give their opinion in favour of some sort of electrical disturbance or other, which by pure chance had focused itself on the point where it would be most felt. After all, as Norbury wrote in an article on a leader page, there could have been electrical storms affecting magnetos in the Sahara since the world first took shape without anyone knowing of them, because there were no magnetos in the Sahara. Perhaps this recent scorching hot summer in England, and perhaps—Norbury put the suggestion forward with unwonted diffidence—new recent electrical methods in England, broadcasting for instance, or the new high-tension grid system all over the country—had brought about some conditions never reproduced before.

It was all a little wild, but Norbury could write well, and he was able to mask most of the weak points in his argument from the not very intelligent mass of his readers by a skilful vagueness. Norbury himself, if the truth must be told, had hesitated for one delirious moment over plunging for a hypothesis that the phenomenon might be due to an attempt by sentient beings on some other planet to attract the attention of mankind. That really seemed as likely to him as the event he was discussing, but he decided in the end to play for safety.

As regards the newspapers who decided in favor of human agency, there was further divergence of opinion as regards the motive behind the act. It might be a practical joke, or it might be the act of a man trying to call attention to some new invention. It might—of course—be due to the machinations of Communists subsidised with Russian gold. It might be a trial effort on the part of some potentially hostile power, or it might be due to inadvertence on the part of government experts employed in testing secret weapons.

In fact, all the way up and down Fleet Street that night there was long and anxious debate. Some editors—or proprietors—were for plumping for one theory, some for another. And as no one knew what new development, if any, to expect next day, everyone wanted to play for safety, only to be brought up against the fact that some theory or other must be put forward to satisfy their readers, who had been carefully educated not to think for themselves. Editors everywhere were saying as usual, "Who would sell a farm and be an editor?"—and in this case they almost began to mean it.

Yet meanwhile, all the time that these hectic decisions were being made in Fleet Street, there was quite another development in Printing House Square. Somebody was reading a letter which had been delivered by hand in the course of the afternoon. Somebody scratched his head, looked up at the ceiling to refresh his memory, and finally went over to the "waiting" file and found another letter in the same disguised handwriting. Somebody at last decided to risk it and take the two letters into higher authority.

Higher authority heard the facts, hurriedly read the two letters and the long duplicate enclosed with the second and tugged his chin as he tried to make up his mind. In the end higher authority went in to the highest authority of all, and told him all about it, and ended up with the words, "I think there's something in it."

HIGHEST authority of all read the three documents, and hesitated long over them. *The Times* has a sense of responsi-

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bility towards its readers, and it also feels a sensitiveness regarding forgeries and unsubstantiated letters dating back to the time of Pigott's forgery of the Parnell letters. But there was something about the letters which were now under consideration which bore the stamp of truth. And if they were true *The Times* had a scoop, a watertight, brass-bound, copper-bottomed scoop of the kind every journalist—even those attached to *The Times*—dreams about in optimistic moments.

"You know what we ought to do with these if they're what you think they are?" said the highest authority of all.

"No, sir," said the other, quite understanding, all the same.

"They ought to go to the police."

"The police? But—but—the fellow hasn't done anything the police can take cognizance of, has he?"

"Well, he's caused an obstruction. The blighters ran me in for that last week when I left my car for five minutes in Holborn. Anyway, it's silly to deny they're after him, or would be, if they thought he existed. You know that as well as I do. They ought to be told."

Yet despite these eminently sensible conclusions, there was a look on both their faces which seemed to belie their spoken words.

"The police?" repeated the younger man, doubtfully.

Lesser newspapers than *The Times* were on intimate terms with the police. News as important as this would leak out for certain, and where would that scoop be then? The old *Times* deserved a scoop, if anyone did. The junior editor's face fell; his disappointment was obvious. His senior saw his expression, and made up his mind then and there.

"We'll publish," he said, his jaw coming forward. "And we won't let the police see these until four o'clock tomorrow morning. You see to that; it ought to be safe enough then. We'll be compounding a felony, but we can't help that. And if we publish at all, we've got to give it prominence. It's taking a chance, but— We'll have to have a leader on it.

"Send Bumblethwaite in to me. And Harriman. You'll have to scrap that article of Macfarlane's on the scientific point of view. He's barking up the wrong tree if this is true, and God send it is. I'll be going out of this office on my ear if it isn't, and so will you, young man, agreement or no agreement. Get going on some sort of introduction for this stuff. You'd better do that yourself. Come back in half an hour."

So that next morning when Dr. Pethwick opened his *Times* at the breakfast table the first thing that caught his eye was a fat column headed "London Traffic Obstruction. A Manifesto." Dr. Pethwick allowed his boiled egg to grow cold while he read the article.

"Yesterday afternoon we received the following letter which was delivered by hand at approximately 4:30 p.m.

To the Editor of *The Times*.

Dear Sir,

I notice that you have not published my letter of the 28th. That was only to be expected, but I hope you will now see your way to publishing it in your next issue, because the present condition of London traffic is sufficient proof of what that letter stated. As a further proof, traffic will be impeded in another part of London for a short period following 10:30 a.m. tomorrow, July 30th.

Yours truly,

Peacemaker.

P.S.—I enclose a copy of my letter of the 28th in case you have mislaid the original.

ON INVESTIGATION (the article went on) it was found that on the evening of the 28th the following letter addressed to the Editor had been received. This had been posted at noon in the London E.C. district. We make no apology for not having published it earlier, because, as our readers will agree, it appeared to be the work of an irresponsible person. But, considered now in the light of recent events, it appears possible that the writer has the power he claims, and we therefore reproduce his letter below. We can only add that both letters are written in a disguised hand, and a photographic reproduction of a part of one of the letters appears on page 14. The originals are now in the possession of the police.

To the Editor of *The Times*:

Dear Sir,

A method has been discovered whereby it is possible to cause a magnet to lose its magnetism at a point a very considerable distance from the instrument used. This applies not merely to permanent magnets, but to electro-magnets as well. As a result

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of this, it is now possible to stop the working of all machines which depend on the practical application of electro-magnetic phenomena. For instance, if a motor-car is submitted to this treatment, the spark, which is caused by the electric current induced in a conductor under the influence of a changing magnetic field, ceases to be produced, and the vehicle will stop.

If the motor-car obtains its spark by use of an induction coil, there will be no permanent harm done, and the vehicle will be free to move as soon as it ceases to be under the influence of the effect. In the case of a magneto it will be found that the permanent magnet has become demagnetized, and in that case it will be necessary to replace the magneto by a new one or to remagnetize the magnet before the vehicle is again available for use.

It will be noticed that this suggestion is of a destructive nature. It is extremely likely that there may be applications of this invention which may be of benefit to the world, but the present suggestion cannot be considered in that light. It will be noticed also that the first thought called up by this suggestion concerns the application of the invention to warfare, to impede the progress of aeroplanes, warships and tanks.

The discoverer, however, has decided that he would not be pleased to see his invention used in war. He is aware of the argument that this invention would tend to make war more humane by hindering the flight, for instance, of bombing aeroplanes, but he is not convinced by it. What he knows of war seems to prove to him that any attempt to make war more humane is based on unsound data, and that such attempts lead only to hypocrisy.

He also believes that the occurrence of war is facilitated, and its likelihood increased, by the existence of armaments. He believes it to be obvious that money is expended on armaments which could be put to better use. He also believes that armaments are maintained at present contrary to the wishes of the majority of people.

In view of these facts, he has decided to make use of his invention to bring about a reduction in armaments. He is aware that conferences have been held to consider this matter, but he believes that in most cases they were not inspired by the necessary sincerity. Consequently, he proposes to interfere with the traffic of London, and, if necessary, to proceed to further action, until a sincere effort has been made to reduce the armaments maintained by the world to the lowest point consistent with the policing of the countries concerned.

Yours truly,

Peacemaker.

The queer flush of excitement which Pethwick experienced did not subside easily. It was not the first time that he had seen writings of his in print—the *British Journal of Physics* had published half a dozen contributions from his pen—but the thrill was still new.

He tried to criticize his compositions cold-bloodedly. He was aware that there was a touch of the melodramatic about that pseudonym of his, but what could he have done otherwise? He had written the "Yours truly" before it occurred to him that he had to put something after it, and "Peacemaker" was quite in the tradition of *Times* pseudonyms. It was as good as "Paterfamilias" or "Amicus Curiae" any day of the week. For the rest, Pethwick could not consider it too bad.

Pethwick was no literary man; he could not realize the painful effect which might be produced by his laconic sentences. A more skilful writer might have contrived to gild the pill a little, to have wrapped up the bald threat in a trifle of verbiage. But that was not Pethwick's way. He wanted disarmament. He believed he could enforce it. It had been difficult to describe his invention in terms that could be understood by unscientific people; to state his whole project in courtly terms would have been impossible to him even if he had realized the necessity.

He ran his eye down the columns describing traffic conditions in London yesterday, and then turned the pages more aimlessly, until his eye caught sight of the leader which Messrs. Bumblethwaite and Harriman had constructed with care. It was a shock to him.

SOMEHOW Dr. Pethwick had conjured up a vague picture of himself as spokesman for a majority. He sincerely believed that by far the greater proportion of humanity would be glad if armaments were abolished, and he had fancied that this announcement of his would be hailed with pleasure. He had actually imagined that people would say, "What fools we were not to think of this before," and that in a week or two the whole business would be settled, and governments would be looking round for suitable purposes on which

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to spend the half of their budgets which would be on their hands now that they were not spending it on armies and navies. That was his conception of how events would move, even if he had not specifically framed it in such words.

His own logical mind was so struck by the absurdity of spending money on armaments that he could not conceive of anyone hesitating, save through sheer inertia, to dispense with them. If any difficulties at all were to be raised, he had assumed vaguely that they might occur somewhere in the distant Balkans, perhaps, where a reactionary government or two might hold out for a space before having to give way before the united demands of their peoples and the economic pressure of the rest of Europe. He only visualized himself as the man who gave the initial tap which started the ball rolling.

But *The Times* leader disillusioned him. It spoke about "Peacemaking extraordinary." It spoke about "fanatics" and "unconstitutional methods." The only caution it displayed was due to a lingering doubt that the two letters from "Peacemaker" might be spurious—it prefaced its wholehearted condemnation of the scheme with a cautious "if at ten-thirty today we are confronted with proof—" Apart from that it simply went for Dr. Pethwick wholeheartedly, using much the same language as had once been employed to describe the men who organized the General Strike. It went on to describe "Peacemaker's" activities as undoubtedly criminal, and it expressed a hope that they would be cut short, promptly and effectively, by the police.

It offered cordial sympathy to all those who had suffered loss yesterday from "Peacemaker's" lunatic behavior. The leader ended up with the inevitable bit of lip-service to the cause of peace—the mealy-mouthed admission that peace and disarmament were the dearest wish of every thinking person—but "actions of this sort discredit the whole movement in favor of disarmament, and only tend to defeat the object which 'Peacemaker' professes to be anxious to achieve."

Pethwick read that leader with a growing uneasiness, and when he read it again the uneasiness grew into indignation; by the time the second reading was finished he was in a state as near to berserk anger as one of his mild temperament could be. He glanced up at the clock on the mantelpiece. At ten-thirty *The Times* would be confronted with all the proof they needed.

Then he remembered his cold egg, and he looked across the table to find Mary's eyes on him.

"Go on and eat your breakfast," said Mary. "You're keeping me hanging about when I've got such a lot to do."

Pethwick dug his spoon into his egg as if the viscous yolk were the heart of *The Times's* leader-writer. He controlled himself as well as he could, gulping down the luke-warm stuff, and remembering to take bites of his bread and butter—as a child when he had been given an egg the rule had been "one little bite of egg and two bites of bread and butter." He drank his cold tea and looked up at the clock again.

"I want to go to town again today," he said, as casually as he could, and when he met Mary's eyes he read in them the expression he dreaded.

"What do you want to go up there for?" she said. "I was going to have a nice dinner today—there a joint coming. You won't be back to dinner, I suppose?"

Mary had noticed his agitation. She had noticed those glances of his at the clock. Suspicions were beginning to germinate within her, and anyway she was in the mood to oppose anything Pethwick wanted to do merely because he wanted to do it. Pethwick tried to put forward the excuse which had served well enough up to now.

"The University Library!" sneered Mary. "What do you want to do at the University Library?"

Pethwick sighed. He tried mildly to explain the hypothetical research he was thinking of undertaking.

"Can't it wait till tomorrow?" demanded Mary. "I was going to have nice 'ot mutton and roast potatoes today. Isn't that good enough for your lordship?"

"Let's have it this evening," said Pethwick. He thought for a moment that the suggestion was a beautiful piece of tactics, but in fact it only added fuel to the flame.

"Have it this evening!" declaimed Mary. "Your lordship wants late dinner now, I suppose. I'm to slave all through the heat this afternoon, just because you want to be like your grand friends, your Dorothy Laxton and so on, I suppose."

Mary meant that shaft to hurt and it did. She saw Pethwick wince. Pethwick pushed back his chair, and rose to his feet, his long gangling length towering over the table. Mary looked at his face again, and for a moment she was afraid. His mouth was shut in a hard line, and his eyes had a stormy brightness. It seemed

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as if the endeavours of ten years were about to bear fruit, and Mary was to succeed in making her husband lose his temper. She thought he was going to strike her, and she felt a mad pleasure mingle with her fear.

But there was always that clock on the mantelpiece. Mary's powers of intuition enabled her to sense how her husband thrust his rage back with a powerful hand. She did not know the motives which were influencing him; she had no knowledge of the pressing need of something to be done in Hammer Court at ten-thirty that morning. All Mary knew was that her husband suddenly pulled himself upright and turned away without a word. She heard him take his hat down from the stand in the hall, and open the street door. As he went out she rushed after him and tore the door open again, standing on the threshold with her dressing-gown hanging round her.

"Ed!" she called. "What time are you going to be back, Ed?"

But Dr. Pethwick was striding off down the street as fast as his ungainly legs would carry him toward the station.

THERE were trains to London Bridge every twenty minutes, and Dr. Pethwick missed the 9:31 by one minute, thanks to the cumulative effect of a late breakfast, a prolonged reading of *The Times*, and an argument with his wife. He fretted and fumed upon the platform. He hardly paid attention to the fact that every one of the contents bills displayed upon the platform made some reference to yesterday's traffic conditions in London. He had promised to bring those conditions about again at 10:30 today, and he felt instinctively that it would produce a bad moral effect if the Peacemaker should prove to be guilty of a human weakness like unpunctuality — and unpunctuality, anyway, always irritated him.

He fidgeted restlessly when the 9:51 at last took him up to London Bridge, looking repeatedly at his watch. When he reached the terminus at 10:08 he discarded the idea he had momentarily entertained of taking a taxicab, and climbed instead upon a less inconspicuous bus. At 10:16 he was hurrying into Hammer Court. Once in his office he began to work feverishly.

With map, rule, and compass he laid off a new line upon his horizontal sheet of paper. With plumb-line and protractor he marked a new line upon his vertical sheet. Then, without bustle, but without wasting a moment, he brought his apparatus out of its locked cupboard, and made the connections with quick, steady fingers. Straightening up when his work was done, he pulled out his watch and reached for the switch. It was exactly 10:30 when he closed the circuit, and on the instant motor traffic in Cannon Street came to an abrupt halt.

In all the newspaper offices of London there had been tension that morning. Someone in high authority had been sitting at his desk in Printing House Square since ten o'clock, too excited even to grumble at the fate which had brought him to his office at this unconscionable hour. He had done nothing in the half hour he had been waiting, but as ten-thirty came near he began to tap nervously on his desk with his pencil. When at last his desk telephone rang he started nervously. Then he reached for the instrument.

"It's all right," said the receiver to his ear. "He's done it. Cannon Street at ten-thirty. On time to the second."

"Thank God!" said the man in high authority.

The good old *Times* had the biggest scoop of the century. This business might have made the paper the laughing-stock of Fleet Street if it had proved to be a hoax, but the Peacemaker had been as good as his word. Telephone bells were shrilling in the offices of the evening papers, and there excited editors heard the news gabbled out to them by excited reporters, and, ringing off abruptly, had sent excited orders down to the printing presses, where the printers had been standing by with a special edition ready to set up.

In twenty minutes the papers were on the streets. The vans were racing through London hurling out great bundles to the newsboys, and excited City men were tearing the damp copies from the newsboys' fingers. "Text of the Peacemaker's Manifesto!" "Who is the Peacemaker?" "Peacemaker's New Mischief!"

Oh, it was the finest scoop *The Times* could remember. Every single newspaper in England had to relax its rule never to mention the name of another newspaper. Every one had to quote *The Times;* in twenty-four hours the paper received more publicity than during the last twelvemonth. People had to buy *The Times* to learn the facts of the delivery of the Peacemaker's letters, and to see the facsimile reproduction of his handwriting,

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even though other papers quoted the letters verbatim.

Dr. Pethwick saw the special editions out for sale when he walked down to Cannon Street to see that everything was as it should be. He bought one and looked at the headlines as he was jostled in the crowd. He himself would never have dreamed of calling that letter of his a "manifesto," but the newspapers seemed determined upon it. There was not much chance of reading more than the headlines, for the crowd was so dense.

The news had gone round the City that the Peacemaker was at work now in Cannon Street, and pens had been flung down and typewriters abandoned while all the City came pouring out to see. There was no more to see, actually, than yesterday; only a cordon of police diverting traffic, and broken down lorries being pushed into side streets, and vehicles lucky enough to have coil ignition being shoved out of the area over which the Klein-Pethwick Effect was being distributed.

Someone in charge of London's traffic arrangements had been ready for the emergency, clearly. Cannon Street was not an important link in the chain of London streets. Diversion of traffic from it did not upset all London, especially when prompt measures were taken to prevent jamming, and horses were ready to hand to deal with the heavy stuff.

Dr. Pethwick saw what little the crowd and the police would permit him to see; it was enough to show him that the Klein-Pethwick Effect was not causing much inconvenience—and he had not realized that so much of the Cannon Street traffic was horsedrawn.

Pethwick turned away from the scene thinking deeply. He found it difficult to decide on the next move; not until he got back to his office and paced up and down the crowded room for a few minutes did he form any resolution. The present demonstration had not been very convincing. He would devote a few minutes to showing how much power he really had.

Pethwick made further calculations, each one resulting in a new line being drawn on his two sheets of paper, and then, standing his emitter on the point of intersection, he revolved it slowly, keeping it stationary on each line in turn for three minutes. And as he turned it, so did traffic come to a halt, first in Cheapside, and then in Princes Street, and then in Cornhill, and then in King William Street, and then in Queen Victoria Street.

The move was an effective one. Three minutes was just long enough to tangle up the traffic, and start the police on their counter-measures. It was more than twenty minutes in each case before they discovered that the Klein-Pethwick Effect had shifted on. The result was that the arrangements made for the diversion of traffic made the confusion worse.

HARASSED policemen, faced with a whole succession of contradictory orders as to which streets were clear and which not, lost their heads completely in the end. Matters were at a worse pass even than yesterday when the police had no warning. All round the City the jam was complete. It was that time that Pethwick straightened his back, switched off the power, and realized that he was hungry.

So far on every day that he had spent in the City he had forgotten about his lunch; in part it was a forgetfulness that Freud could explain, because Pethwick shrank a little from the prospect of entering a strange restaurant and ordering food from a menu in which he was sure to lose his way. But today he felt equal to the effort, especially with the aid of his new clothes. He dismantled the apparatus and locked it away, put on the beautiful grey suit, and went out into the seething streets in search of food.

At the table to which chance led him there were five young men having lunch, but it was not of course pure chance that they were debating the Peacemaker's activities. It would have been extraordinary if Pethwick had found a table where the diners were not doing so. Pethwick listened to their conversation while he ate his fried fillets of plaice. Pethwick was just like a maiden aunt; maiden aunts always choose fried fillets or plaice if it ever happens that they must eat in a strange restaurant.

The general attitude of the five young men towards the Peacemaker was one of admiration, perhaps even of envy. They did not blame him in the least for what he had done. They called it a "sporting effort"; they thought it rather amusing that he should set a city of ten million souls in a turmoil. They laughed immoderately at the account of the fury of the senior partner who employed one of them at the non-arrival of something or other which he was urgently expecting.

Pethwick listened to all this with a secret pleasure. It was only after some time that

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he began to realize that none of this admiration was directed towards the object he had in mind when he began. There was no word among them about disarmament.

Twice Pethwick put down his knife and fork and looked across at them. He was on the point of asking them what was their opinion of disarmament and the Peacemaker's views, but he found he simply could not bring himself to plunge uninvited into conversation with strangers; besides, he feared lest he might betray himself. And then, right at the very end of the meal, the thin dark one of the party brought up the subject.

"Do you think he really means it about this disarmament business?" he asked.

"He's got a hope if he does, poor blighter," said the red-haired one. "But I don't expect he does. Give us my ticket, please, Lilly."

That was all—two sentences exchanged while they were getting up from the table.

Pethwick did not know it, but the color had gone from his face and he walked stiffly and more upright than usual as he paid for his lunch and walked out of the restaurant. His first action when he was back in his office was to pull out his fountain-pen and reach for paper. He must clear up any doubts on the subject of his earnestness straight away.

Yet to write that letter was more than he could do. He was no man of the pen. It was torment to him to try and write in detail about matters on which he felt very strongly. That original letter of his to *The Times* showed how unsuited he was for this part of the business. It told all the necessary facts, but without embellishment or elaboration. And a man who wishes to plead a cause before the masses must learn not to flinch from reiteration, must not spare his own feelings—if he has any—must point the obvious and not hesitate in the matter of clap-trap appeal. He must do all the things Pethwick shrank from doing.

What Pethwick needed at the moment was someone to play Huxley to his Darwin, someone of fluent pen and vigorous argument, who could encase the mailed fist of Pethwick's brute force in the velvet glove of words. The time was ripe for a brilliant exposition of Pethwick's ideals. A well-written statement of the case for disarmament might at the moment have been read with sympathy, now that the wandering attention of the public had been diverted towards it for a space. Pethwick had actually felt this when he came back to the office; just for a moment he had been in touch with public opinion—a most unusual state of affairs for Dr. Pethwick.

But with pen and paper before him the momentary inspiration oozed away. He could not state the obvious all over again. People who wanted to know what his proposal was could refer to today's *Times*—Pethwick did not appreciate the fact that in a week's time no one would dream of referring back to an issue a week old; he judged people by himself, and he was quite accustomed to being referred to arguments printed in the *British Journal of Physics* months ago.

And he had not the arts of demagogy. Now that he had caught the attention of the public he could not change his tactics and revert from threats to argument—he could not, that is to say, take a lesson from the practice of public speakers who start their speeches with an anecdote in order to induce people to listen to them before proceeding to argue. He had not guessed at the subtle mixture of force and persuasion which is necessary to get things done.

IF PETHWICK had ever made use of analogy, he might have compared himself with a parent who finds his child playing with an adder under the impression that it is a grass snake. Probably the parent has only to say "Put down that snake. If it bites you you will die," to be obeyed. At worst he has only to add, "If you don't put it down I will smack you." To Pethwick the attitude of the world towards armaments could not be very different from that of the child towards the adder. Circumstances had compelled him to start with the smack to attract the child's attention and to show him that smacking was possible, but after the smack no intelligent child would go on playing with the adder when once he had been told it was poisonous. Perhaps dealing with intelligent children had unfitted Pethwick for dealing with the public.

The result of the fading out of the inspiration which had possessed him on his return was that the letter he wrote was excessively brief.

All he said was:

Dear Sir,

I am quite sincere in my desire to bring about disarmament. I hope that the necessary steps will soon be taken to initiate the movement.

Yours truly,
Peacemaker.

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That was all he could say. Once again, it was a complete statement of the relevant facts, and Pethwick could not imagine any necessity for further elaboration—for a few seconds he had had the revelation, but it was gone now.

As he addressed the envelope, he remembered, with an odd twisted smile, that the police were after him now. It was very likely that a watch was being kept in Printing House Square to see who might be delivering letters by hand. Pethwick decided that it would be better to send the letter by post. It would reach *The Times* office by the evening, and ought even then to appear in the morning's issue.

And when he had posted the letter he realized that there was nothing more for him to do today. He might as well go home, and he turned his steps towards London Bridge and the station. The sight of the evening newspaper placards suddenly reminded him that he had not read the early edition he had bought—he must have lost it somewhere or other. He did something he had never done before in his life—he bought copies of all the three London evening papers, and went on board the train with them.

He was almost prepared, by now, for the reception which the papers were according to his proposals for augmenting the well-being of the world. There was a howl of indignation in every column. As he passed from page to page he found the same attitude maintained. The Peacemaker's activities were a criminal impertinence. He must be mad to imagine that a country like England could be driven into a change of policy by high-handed methods.

The sooner the police pulled themselves together and laid this dangerous lunatic by the heels the better. It was not by crimes against private property that the world had ever been reformed. Had the Peacemaker taken no thought for the unoffending people his actions would injure —the clerks in the buses, the firms which owned the lorries? Had he forgotten the injury he would be doing England? He was impeding England's sacred commerce, stopping the flow of her very life-blood. Not to any great extent, of course, so this leader hastened to add. But sufficiently, perhaps, to damage England's credit in foreign eyes, because foreign public opinion was likely to take an exaggerated view of disturbances occurring in peaceful England

The second paper was as violent. According to this one, the Peacemaker's activities were as bad as those of the bombing aeroplanes which he professed to deprecate. A bomb dropped in a town did indiscriminate damage to the private property of unoffending citizens. So did this new invention. The leader ventured to cast doubts on the nationality of the man —or men—who were guilty of this unnational act It was not what could be expected of Englishmen. Far more likely it was part of a Bolshevik plot, or it was a Communist affair On another column this paper had gone to the trouble to collect legal opinions on the subject of with what crimes the Peacemaker could be charged when he was apprehended. The list was portentous, ranging from petty offences like obstructing streets and causing a crowd to collect all the way up to the heights of high treason—one very eminent legal luminary had committed himself to this last.

Alongside this column was another, made up of fresh interviews with scientists regarding the nature of the new phenomenon and the methods by which the miscreant could be traced.

Most of these opinions were singularly cautious. The inevitable Norbury made a great play with references to Clerk Maxwell's calculations regarding the ratio between the electro-magnetic and electrostatic constants of the ether, but he did not seem to advance very far along those lines. On the contrary, the impression on the reader's mind was that Norbury was fighting a brilliant rearguard action, carrying out his retirement behind a skirmishing screen of technicalities.

One or two other people were a little bolder; but the most noticeable unanimity of opinion was that everyone agreed now that the thing could be done, even though no one could put forward a working suggestion as to how. No one—not even Norbury, who had brought the matter to Pethwick's notice—seemed to remember anything about the researches of the late August Klein.

Next to these columns came the cartoon, which displayed the Peacemaker (a brilliant conception distinguished by a squint, round spectacles, straws in his hair, and a wide grin that displayed vast teeth), hitting John Citizen on the head with a club, and saying: "There, that'll show you how to be peaceful."

THE last thing Pethwick bothered to read in this paper was the usual sort of column filled with the usual sort of sen-

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timent about the blessings of peace and disarmament. Every paper, even the most bellicose, had evinced (as Dorothy Laxton had pointed out to Pethwick weeks ago) occasional sentiments of this sort ever since 1918. They had every appearance of being genuine; it was bewildering.

Apparently the writer of this particular article had been in search of variety. Whereas every other article had begun by condemnation of the Peacemaker's methods and had concluded with the perfunctory paragraph of lip service to the cause of peace, this writer had simply reversed the process. He enumerated the blessings of peace, and had even quoted from the long list of distinguished men who were on the side of disarmament; but from there he proceeded to attack the Peacemaker's methods of attaining these ends. Such was the vehemence of the attack, so obviously had he no words bad enough to do justice to his subject, and so skillfully were his arguments mustered, that the final effect left upon the mind of the reader was that all this condemnation was equally deserved by the names quoted higher up.

Pethwick had not started the third paper when the train ran into the station and he got out. Walking home, along the High Street and up Verulam Road, he felt depression overcoming him. If this were the way which his attempt to ameliorate the condition of the world was going to be received, he was up against a very difficult task. Yet it was not the difficulties ahead of him which depressed him so much as the incredible stupidity of mankind.

All the opposition to his scheme he attributed to prejudice and inertia. In a new moment of clairvoyance he realized that prejudices were far bigger obstacles than convictions. All this vast mass of prejudice must be swept away before he could win through to Dorothy's favor, and not only here in England, but in France, Germany, Poland, Italy.

It was a long, dreary, lonely road that lay ahead of him. But all the same, there was something about Pethwick which made him more determined the more he realized the difficulties he had to encounter. His chin came forward and his head came up. By the time he reached the corner of Launceton Avenue he looked twice the man he had appeared when he got down from the train.

Perhaps it was that gesture of straightening his back which reminded him of what he had not done, or perhaps it was just the gleam of the beautiful suit which caught his eye. Pethwick stopped in consternation. Here he was, only a hundred yards from home, still wearing his new clothes. If the realization had been delayed two more minutes Mary would have seen them.

Pethwick felt himself flush as he pictured to himself the torrent of questions to which he would have been instantly subjected, the suspicion and the embarrassment. The cause for which he was laboring, even, would have been imperilled —Pethwick had no doubts about the chances of his secret being disclosed if Mary shared it. There was only one thing to do. Pethwick turned about abruptly, back to the station, by train back to London Bridge, back to the office, where he changed his clothes.

It was the clearest warning he had received of the necessity of constant vigilance and attention. The slightest slip would mean the end of all his fine plans; though they were not so important), imprisonment, unemployment, and starvation.

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CHAPTER VII

THE TIMES next day was outspoken in its condemnation of the Peacemaker. Pethwick at breakfast read much the same sentiments as he had read the day before in the evening papers, with the addition of a violent editorial tirade against the insolence of the new letter the Peacemaker had had the impertinence to address to them. That anyone should dream to dictate a policy to the British Empire in a laconic note of three lines was positively unbearable. The Peacemaker must learn that Britons were made of sterner stuff. They would never submit to such high-handed methods.

It was worse still that the Peacemaker should have backed his demand with a further wanton interference with London traffic. He had caused a great deal of inconvenience and perhaps some petty loss. The mere fact that he had done this was sufficient justification for ignoring his letters altogether. There could be no thought of doing anything whatever to meet the demands of someone actually engaged in criminal practices. Nevertheless, if Pethwick had been able to read between the lines he might have found some hope in the irritation which *The Times* displayed at the dilatory methods of the police.

These latter, so *The Times* declared, ought to have laid the Peacemaker by the heels hours ago. It was a poor testimony to their modern scientific methods that they had not succeeded in tracing him at once. Surely, with the whole body of public opinion behind them, and the advice of the whole scientific world to draw upon should they need it, they should do better than this. But at any rate, *The Times* understood that the police were engaged in following up various clues which they had discovered. Perhaps at the very time these lines were read an arrest may have been effected, and in a few weeks' time this mad effort by the Peacemaker would be falling back into the oblivion which characterised similar hopeless attempts at revolution by violence, like the Cato Street conspiracy.

Pethwick read this pious wish with a little smile. He could not imagine anyone discovering him—in that he was like many other criminals. No one would ever commit a crime if he was not confident that he would avoid detection.

And, as a matter of fact Pethwick was safe enough. The police had not the least idea how to set about discovering him. No scientist could suggest how the Klein-Pethwick Effect was caused. No examination of lists of prominent Communists or Pacifists could offer any line of investigation to follow. The task of the police could be compared with looking for a needle in a bundle of hay if one was not quite sure what a needle was like and had doubts as to where the bundle of hay actually was. The police would have to wait in patience for the help of their usual allies—carelessness on the part of the man they were seeking, and "information received," and blind good fortune.

The one possible loophole centered round Mr. Todd, who had let the Hammer Court office to Dr. Pethwick. It was just possible that he might connect Dr. Pethwick with these outrages—but the possibility seemed much smaller on closer examination than at first sight. For Mr. Todd let offices every day of his life; his encounter with Dr. Pethwick made far more impression on Dr. Pethwick than on Mr. Todd.

Furthermore, the Hammer Court office was underground and tucked away in a cul-de-sac. It was quite distant from, and completely out of sight of, the scenes of the Peacemaker outrages. The unscientific mind, even in these days of wireless telephony, found it hard to conceive of a power which could make itself felt through solid earth and stone walls, and without any great preparation and in a room no larger than the average kitchen. Mr. Todd can certainly be excused for not connecting the polished, well-dressed, completely sensible gentleman with the fanatical figure portrayed in Poy's cartoons.

It was a pity that Pethwick had had the wit to realize all this at the same time as he had the folly to think that humanity could be coerced into doing something for its own good. Pethwick, of course, had fallen into the old error of confounding persons with people, individuals with the mass. He did not appreciate that where a hundred separate individuals might each be relied on to be perfectly sensible when conducting their particular concerns, that same hundred people considered as a mass might be guilty of the most illogical actions.

The Times was in the process of disillusioning him. What irritated him most was the fact that the objective he desired most—the establishment of an international conference determined upon disarmament, and not held back by secret instructions or sheer stupidity—was not discussed at all. The possibility was quite ignored. Apart from the usual vague tributes to the bless-

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ings of peace the whole attention of the paper was concentrated upon abusing him and his methods, in a way Pethwick had not expected at all.

In his vague visualization of the result of his efforts Pethwick had thought that the attention of the public would be directed upon disarmament, with only the slightest notice taken of himself once the initial surprise had worn off. He was both embarrassed by and annoyed at the publicity he was receiving. And to see it broadly hinted that his sole object was personal publicity, and to see himself compared with a maniac who drops a bomb from the gallery into the crowded stalls of a theatre, simply maddened him. He flung the paper aside testily, caught his wife's eye, and applied himself guiltily to his breakfast.

WHEN breakfast was over he was vaguely restless. He had decided that there was no need to go up to the office that morning, and the unusual prospect of an idle day before him seemed extraordinarily irksome. He idled about the room; he helped his wife wash up. And then when Mary had gone out shopping and he found himself alone in the house restlessness overcame him. He felt absolutely no temptation to sit down with a book, as he would have loved to do six months ago. Ten minutes after Mary had gone out Pethwick went out too, having spent the ten minutes walking aimlessly from room to room about the house.

At the station bookstall he asked for all the newspapers.

"Yes, sir," said the bookstall attendant unmoved—it is a request which is made to bookstall attendants more often than one would expect. "Financial papers as well?"

"M'm, well—no," said Dr. Pethwick.

"And you don't want *The Times*, do you, sir? We delivered that to you this morning. But there's the *Manchester Guardian*."

"I'll have that," said Pethwick.

With London's eight other newspapers and the *Manchester Guardian* under his arm he went back to Launceton Road, and for the first time in his life he set himself to a study of public opinion.

Public opinion in this case seemed to be practically unanimous. Wherever Pethwick turned his eyes, it seemed to him, they encountered cries of rage, frozen into print, like Niagara in winter. These newspapers were all a day behind *The Times*, for once in a way, because they had no knowledge of the Peacemaker's third letter, but they made up for it in the violence of their opinions.

The expression "private property" cropped up over and over again; the fact that the Peacemaker was interfering with private property appeared to be the measure of his crime—one was left with the impression that if the Peacemaker had confined his activities to government concerns he would not have been so guilty—although, as Pethwick assured himself when this occurred to him, there would have been just as much fury evinced if he had held up the Fleet, or tank evolutions on Salisbury Plain. They would have attacked him on the other flank then, for lack of patriotism or something.

As it was one newspaper roundly accused him of being unpatriotic (in a special sense, that is—all the articles condemned him vaguely under that head). This particular article was one of the few which condescended to discuss the one thing the Peacemaker had asked for—an international conference. The Peacemaker must be unpatriotic, argued this article, for if such a conference were to be held—as of course was inconceivable—England would come to it gravely handicapped from the start. As a result of the other powers at the conference knowing that she was being forced into it, her bargaining power would be terribly limited, so that she would be bound to be worst off.

Pethwick scratched his head at that. He could not imagine what bargaining had to do with the sort of conference he had in mind—which just shows what a simple fellow he was. He knew perfectly well that a disarmament conference with no *arrière-pensée* at all would settle the whole matter in a week's discussion, or in three hours, for that matter, if intelligent men were sent there—but even Dr. Pethwick was not so simple as to expect this last. But this "bargaining" suggestion left him puzzled. It was the complete negation of the notion he himself harboured. He tossed the paper aside and turned to the others.

The little illustrated papers were just as bad. They were full of pictures showing the traffic jams in Cannon Street and Cheapside. They published, at the request of the police, the same photographic reproductions of the Peacemaker's manifesto (they all called it that) as *The Times* had published the day before. But they gave no hint at all of extending a welcome to a movement which might reduce income tax by half-a-crown in the pound, which was remarkable when considered in con-

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junction with their repeated references to "private property."

Some of the other papers simply foamed at the mouth. *The Times* had been studiously moderate in estimating the amount of trouble caused by the Peacemaker's activities—partly from a simple desire to allay possible public agitation, and partly, it is to be imagined, to show the peacemaker that he was not as important an individual as he thought he was. But newspapers who never included the word "moderation" in their vocabularies let themselves go—especially as this was August, when every newspaper prays for something to happen, and when newspapers which deal with sensations begin to pine and die.

They wrote up the traffic scenes and the disorder in the City with vast headlines and heavy cross-headings. It was curious that at the same time they declared, in other columns, that the total effect produced was infinitesimal compared with the whole bulk of London traffic. Pethwick was vaguely reminded of the days during the war when he was a boy, when with one breath the newspapers described the difficulties experienced in an offensive, and with the next boldly declared that the enemy was not merely drained of his strength but thoroughly demoralized into the bargain.

Even the more moderate newspapers were not encouraging. They deplored the rash action of the Peacemaker, nor would they offer the most cautious approval of his motives. Indeed, they made haste to declare their conviction that the Peacemaker could not possibly be a member of the political parties which they supported. They were most anxious to show that although they had always been steady advocates of disarmament they abhorred this kind of militant peacemaking.

PETHWICK dropped the last of the papers beside him and fell into thought. He was sick with disappointment. At first it was not his failure that moved him so much as the fact that humanity was exhibiting itself in so deplorable a light. Only later did he begin to think about himself. When Dorothy came back from Norway he would only have this fiasco to show her. He would not be haloed with glory and success. True, he had made a noise in the world, but Pethwick judged that a failure, however noisy, would not re-establish himself in Dorothy's good opinion. Lordly Ones never fail.

His feelings were wounded, too, by the venomous remarks of the newspapers. It hurt him to be compared with bomb-throwing notoriety-hunters, to have it said of him that he was traitorous and un-English; to have the purity of his motives impugned; to see it hinted broadly that he must be insane.

It was under the stress of all these mixed motives that his expression hardened and his mouth shut tightly. Let them say what they liked, think what they liked. He was going through with it. He would show them what they were up against. He would compel them to take the matter seriously.. If they would not act of their own accord after this reminder of what was to their advantage, he would force them to do so. He would intensify his campaign. Already in his mind he had vague ideas as to further uses to which his invention could be put. He began to fill in the details, to make plans.

So engrossed was he that he did not hear Mary's return. She found him sitting in the armchair with newspapers littered all about him, and she was about to upbraid him when she saw his face. The sound of her voice died away in her throat and she stood with her mouth wide open in surprise. She had never seen him like this before; his mouth was shut in a hard line, his brows were drawn together; his whole expression was one of ferocious determination.

Even his hands were clenched tight. Anything more different from his usual expression of mild abstraction it was difficult to imagine. She was frightened; there was something satanic in the contrast between his pleasant features and the brutal determination they expressed. To Mary's distorted imagination, that was how Pethwick would look if Pethwick were ever to commit a murder. And Mary realized that there was only one person on earth whom he was likely ever to want to murder—herself. She had a spasm of fright lest by some evil chance Pethwick had discovered that she had been telling lies to Dorothy Laxton. She felt a chilly sensation run down her body and legs.

But that fear was quickly dispelled by Pethwick's sudden awakening to her presence. He started guiltily. The strange look faded from his face and was replaced by one which might be seen on the face of a child discovered in naughtiness. He was momentarily afraid lest Mary should start making deductions from his attitude, from the newspapers strewn around him.

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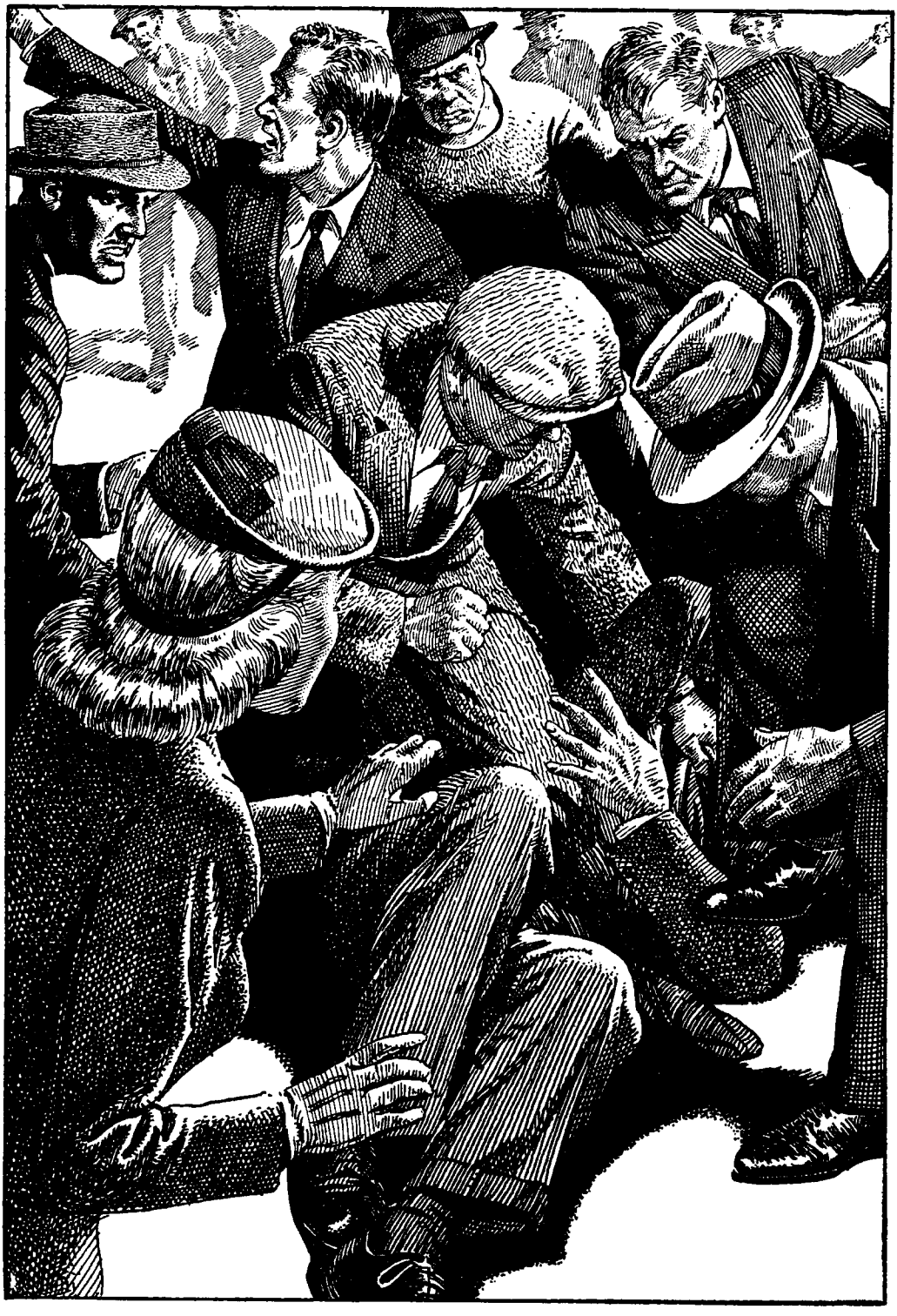

He fell beneath the feet of the aimlessly rioting mob.

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But Pethwick had known his wife too long in ordinary circumstances to be able to predict her conduct with any certainty in extraordinary ones. He was familiar with her illogical habits of thought, with the way in which the processes of her mind were habitually tangled up. He gave her no credit for flashes of intuition, nor for the very real capacity for putting two and two together which she could display in an emergency. Illogical logic was so foreign both to his make-up and to his training that he had only contempt for it, a tendency to underrate its possibilities. He did not realize how easy it is for a woman, even one as muddled as Mary, to guess at the state of mind of a man with whom she has lived for ten years.

Mary's first words seemed to dispel any doubts he had regarding whether she had noticed anything strange.

"What on earth is all this mess?" asked Mary. She could begin no domestic conversation without a complaint.

"It's only today's newspapers," said Pethwick, soothingly. "I'll clear them up now."

"So I should think. You clear them all up and take them away. I won't have them cluttering up *my* house. I can't think what you wanted them all for."

Pethwick had what he considered a brilliant inspiration.

"I only wanted to see what they said about this Peacemaker business," he said, with elaborate carelessness. "It raises a very interesting problem in physics. It would be an interesting problem to work out what is this method he uses."

"Yes," said Mary.

She watched his gawky movements as he tried to put the papers together. Her eyes were bright and unwinking.

PETHWICK'S instincts were goading him into action. Perhaps he actually felt that this was the time for words more than deeds, but he was not a man of words. He could not write the long letter to *The Times* which might have been his best move now. He could not write the pleading disclaimer of all the incorrect motives which had been attributed to him, nor, now that he could be sure of the attention of his audience, could he write the long academic defense of disarmament, humorous, persuasive, convincing, which might save the situation. In his present state of irritation all that was beyond him. He would go on as he had begun. As a hint had not been enough, he must proceed to give indisputable evidence of his power and his determination. Plans and calculations seethed in his mind.

One stray by-product of a scientific training is an ability to use reference books, to dig out the most obscure data from the most unpromising authorities. Dr. Pethwick after lunch went round to the public library to find out things about Paris. His knowledge of the French language was limited to two dozen words; he had never crossed the Channel. But that accusation of being unpatriotic had hurt him, and moreover he was beginning to realize the necessity of convincing other nations besides the English of the desirability of disarmament. Some time soon he must extend his activities to the Continent, and before he could really begin planning this new offensive he must have facts to work upon.

In the reference library the Librarian welcomed him. Dr. Pethwick had a certain reputation for vast learning which extended through the suburb from its focus in the school. There was a good deal of deference in the Librarian's manner. He found Dr. Pethwick an isolated table with pens and ink and blotting-paper, and made him free of all shelves of standard reference books which Dr. Pethwick said he wished to consult. Then he withdrew on tiptoe, awed and reverent, while Dr. Pethwick plunged eagerly into this new investigation.

That knack of his to find his way about books of reference was very evident here. He made one or two false starts—for instance, he found *Whitaker's Almanack* for once in a way singularly unhelpful—but in two hours he had accumulated all the facts he needed, by the aid of three gazetteers, a handbook on *What to See in Paris*, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and a Dictionary of French Technical Terms.

The plans for a raid on Paris were taking shape rapidly in his mind. The two or three important pieces of apparatus which he would need he could take in his pockets to avoid questions at the customs examination which he expected. With the aid of the technical dictionary he would be able to buy the more ordinary pieces—they were things which anyone might want and could buy without exciting suspicion in a radio shop. He had looked up the items in the dictionary to make sure.

For the rest—he knew now what was the voltage and cycles per second of the Paris electricity supply. He knew that the generating station was at Colombes, on the

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Seine bank opposite Argenteuil, a couple of miles from the center of Paris. He had studied the maps of Paris, and he had decided that the thickest traffic ought to be somewhere along the Rue de Rivoli. In his mind he had picked out the intersection of the Rue de Pont Neuf, but that could wait until he was able to study the situation with his own eyes.

It was all very straightforward. He could find his way to Paris, he supposed—he would have to encounter French customs officers and French railway porters and find a train in a French station, but if the worst came to the worst he could follow some English people who appeared to be sure of what they were doing. Then—a room in an hotel, a rapid purchase of the materials he would need, a couple of days spent on the construction of the new condenser and emitter, and he could attack the Paris traffic from his hotel room.

Dr. Pethwick put all the books back tidily on the shelves and walked out, smiling his thanks to the Librarian. He would carry out the scheme shortly; before he could set about it he intended to make a further attempt to stir London out of its sluggishness—and, more important still, he had to decide how to persuade Mary to agree to his leaving her for a few days. That was going to be difficult; they had not been separated for as much as a night for ten years. He would have to think out how best to set about it while he was proceeding with his next move.

He walked down the steps of the library into the High Street again. His eye was caught by the posters of a man selling evening newspapers—"Peacemaker's New Impertinence." Presumably that was a comment on his brief letter to *The Times* which had appeared that morning. He did not buy a paper—he had read enough newspaper criticism for one day, and he was already experienced enough to guess at the tone of this new effusion. His mouth set hard again at the thought of it. Quite unconsciously he quickened his steps so as to hasten his entry upon his new move.

LENHAM'S garage was some way down the High Street from the station. Dr. Pethwick walked in up the crescent-shaped cement path beside the petrol pumps, and stood for a moment hesitating at the open doors of the big workshop, where innumerable motor-cars in all stages of dissection—one or two of them, perhaps, were there as the result of his efforts of the previous days—were being dealt with by mechanics. Then Pethwick smiled as a lean young man in blue overalls came hastening up to him.

"Good afternoon, Lenham," said Dr. Pethwick.

"Good afternoon, Doctor. It's very nice to see you here."

Young Lenham—son and heir of old Lenham who owned the garage—had been a favorite pupil of Dr. Pethwick's five years ago. He still cherished an affection for the kindly man who had initiated him

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into the mysteries of electricity and magnetism and statics. His white teeth showed up in his swarthy sunburned face as he grinned hospitably at the doctor.

"I've seen you once or twice at the station, lately, sir," said Lenham, "but you always seemed to be in a bit of a hurry."

"Yes, I've been busy for the last day or two," said Pethwick.

There was a little pause in which they went on smiling at each other. Pethwick's heart was warmed by this discovery that there was one person at least in the world who seemed pleased to see him. Then he realized that he ought to state his business; it was a little bit of an effort to take the plunge.

"What I want to talk to you about," he said, at length, "is that I want a motor-car."

"A car?" said Lenham.

Automatically Lenham's face assumed the expression common to all dealers in motor-cars when possible purchases are under discussion—the same alert impassivity as can be seen on the face of an Irish horse-dealer; but he grinned again immediately. He did not want to make money out of the doctor.

"A new one?" he asked.

"No," said Dr. Pethwick. "It will have to be an old one. I haven't very much money."

"None of us have," Lenham grinned. "But I expect I can find something for you. What sort of a car do you want? Two-seater?"

"No," said Pethwick. "I want an enclosed car. I think it's called a saloon."

"Yes," said Lenham. He was quick to realize that there actually existed on earth people who were doubtful about the differences between saloons and coupés and and touring-cars.

"How much were you thinking of spending?" he asked.

"Not very much," said Pethwick, who had only the vaguest notion as to how much a second-hand saloon motor-car might cost. All he knew was that occasionally in common-room conversations he had heard stray allusions to the cheapness of second-hand cars.

"Well," explained Lenham, patiently. "It's this way. You can get a second-hand car for ten pounds. But you can pay two hundred if you want to."

"Ten pounds sounds very much like the figure I want to pay," said Pethwick. "I don't want anything very elaborate. I just want— I just want—"

"Something which goes and keeps the rain out?" said Lenham.

"That's right."

Lenham led Dr. Pethwick round behind the workshop to a row of lock-up garages. He undid a padlock, swung open the doors and with a gesture invited Dr. Pethwick's consideration of the contents.

"Yes," said Dr. Pethwick, vaguely, peering inside. "Yes. It looks very nice."

"There's your cheap car, sir," said Lenham, walking in. "1925 Morris. It'll run as long as ever you want—it's got the old Vickers engine, you know."

Dr. Pethwick eyed the vehicle. Up to this time one motor-car had been very like another motor-car to Dr. Pethwick. That bull-nosed bonnet, that box-like body, meant nothing to him. He did not realize that in the eyes of the *illuminati* they indicated that the car was eight years old and therefore as much out of date as a sedan chair or an ancient British chariot. He literally meant what he said when he said that all he wanted was a car which would go along and keep the rain out.

"Would you like to try her?" asked Lenham.

"Yes," said Pethwick. "I should. But I can't drive a car."

Lenham tried to look as if every day of the week he met people who could not drive a car.

"As a matter of fact, Lenham," went on Dr. Pethwick, "I was going to ask you if you would teach me."

"I should like to, sir," said Lenham, and he meant it.

IN THE office Dr. Pethwick signed a check for fifteen pounds for the car, and a check for ten pounds in payment of tax to the end of the year and insurance.

"Now you go to County Hall tomorrow and get your license," said Lenham, "and we'll take her out tomorrow afternoon. I suppose you'll be wanting to drive by Bank Holiday."

Bank Holiday was next Monday—four days off. Pethwick nodded.

"By the way," he said, awkwardly, "would you mind not saying anything about this? My wife—"

The sentence trailed off into nothingness, but Lenham nodded paternally—this interview had made him feel really paternal towards this rather pathetic figure.

"I understand," he said. "You want it to be a surprise."

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Lenham had sold motor-cars to certainly not less than a hundred excited husbands who wanted to give their wives a surprise. That fact saved Pethwick from telling the only lie he had been able to think of, to the effect that his wife did not approve of motor-cars.

So that the Friday before Bank Holiday Pethwick had a busy day. First he had to go to Hammer Court, and set up his apparatus, and set the Klein-Pethwick Effect at work upon the main traffic crossing in front of the Royal Exchange; as he was not intending to remain in the office to shift the emitter about he selected the most vulnerable part of the City for his demonstration. Then, leaving the apparatus at work, and at the very moment when London fell into the turmoil which was beginning to be almost its usual condition, he locked his office door and hurried off to Westminister Bridge to obtain his driving license.

With that in his possession he came back to the City—casually thinking the while of the oddity of a world which hands over with less than half an hour's formality a permit to anyone to make use of a machine which could be quite as dangerous to innocent people as a high-explosive bomb—and he won his way with difficulty back to Hammer Court. Queen Victoria Street and Cannon Street were crammed as ever with congested traffic; the usual policemen were diverting everything from the heart of the City. Near the Mansion House Pethwick saw the emergency horses coming up to help—already the policemen had made permanent arrangements for teams to pull helpless vehicles out of the way.

Locked again in his office, Pethwick spent one half hour on making the task of the police more difficult by turning the emitter steadily around on its center, catching Cannon Street at its very worst and positively raising Cain by holding paralyzed everything at the corner of Cheapside and King Street. Here, a busy police inspector, emboldened by the apparent permanence of the stay of the Klein-Pethwick Effect outside the Royal Exchange, had been sending traffic by the comparatively short detour through Gresham Street and Throgmorton Street.

The mischief completed, Pethwick dismantled his apparatus again, locked his cupboard and his office door, and started back for home. There was a most unusual and very pleasant bubble of excitement in his breast as he walked back over London Bridge. Even Dr. Pethwick, a dry-as-dust Professor, and one furthermore with all his serious purposes in view, could feel a little thrill of exhilaration at the thought that he was actually going to drive a motor car today.

New interests had been rare in Dr. Pethwick's life. He had hardly ever had a chance to be an ordinary human being—and on the last occasion Dorothy had been torn from him. There was something amazingly cheerful about the prospect of learning to drive; it might be due in part—the possibility is one which at least merits consideration—to the fact that it involved the needed companionship of Lenham.

Pethwick had been fond of Lenham when he had been his pupil, and he liked him even better now. Human society had been denied Pethwick for a long time, and recent events had both increased and made him more conscious of his feeling of isolation. The man was so savagely condemned by the whole Press of England was immeasurably pleased at young Lenham's evident pleasure in seeing him.

AFTER his midday dinner Pethwick started out for Lenham's garage. He did not notice Mary's keen glance at him when he announced his intention of being out all the afternoon. A factor which he had not allowed for in his plans was developing which might wreck them, and he was still unaware of it. Pethwick was used to dealing with apparatus and with mathematical expressions—reliable instruments, whose behaviour in given circumstances was at least calculable. But his own reactions, and those of his wife, were not calculable. He had never thought that at the prospect of driving a motor-car he would rise from the table exhibiting pleasurable anticipation; nor had he expected that his wife would be observant enough to take notice of it.

Pethwick found Lenham standing beside the open bonnet of the Morris.

"Shall we begin at the beginning, sir?" he asked.

"Er—yes, I suppose we had better," said Pethwick.

It says much for the fantastic nature of Pethwick's upbringing that, although a Doctor of Science, he had never once looked inside the bonnet of a motor-car. But at least Pethwick's enormous theoretical knowledge enabled him to follow with ease Lenham's brief lecture upon the mechanics of the internal-combustion

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vehicle. The clutch and the gearbox, ignition and the variation in the timing thereof, were all things with which Pethwick was quite familiar in diagrams and to some extent in bench demonstrations.

"Well, that's everything," said Lenham, pulling the jack away. He had just jacked up and changed a wheel, to the accompaniment of Pethwick's unbounded admiration for this technique, in a minute and a quarter, as final part of his instruction in running repairs. "Let's take her out now. We'll go round to the quiet streets—Dalkeith Road is the best. Will you drive her there?"

Pethwick thought of the roaring High Street traffic, of coloured lights and constables.

"I think it would be better if you did," he said.

Yet all the same Pethwick proved himself a not very slow pupil. He knew before he set out to drive what it was he had to learn. He knew of the necessity for adjusting engine speed to road speed, so that double declutching came easily to him. He fully appreciated the need for letting in the clutch gently, and for keeping the engine going, come what might.

The manipulative skill acquired at the experimental bench came to his rescue, too. By the third attempt he was feeling the gear lever into position like a good driver, and the most complex problem of driving was simpler than some of the operations he had to perform in the physics laboratory. He did not get flurried when he had to sound his horn, put out his hand, turn his wheel, apply his brakes, and change gear practically simultaneously.

"There ought to be something to do with your teeth as well," said Lenham, making the little stock joke he always employed at this stage of the tuition. But Pethwick was keeping such a clear head that on this occasion the point of the joke was not quite so obvious.

As one would expect, Pethwick's main trouble arose from lack of self-confidence. He had to screw up his nerve to plunge into traffic when the time came; he took his foot hastily off the accelerator at the very first sign of trouble ahead. When he had to make a right-hand turn out of a busy street he found it hard to believe that these lordly drivers would pay attention to his out-stretched hand and let him through—and as a matter of fact the far-too-common drivers with bad road manners did their best to discourage him.

"Don't worry about the people behind," insisted Lenham. "Put your hand out in plenty of time, and then round you go. It's only the damn' fools you have to look out for."

All very well, but Pethwick had been treated all his life with such scant courtesy that he found difficulty in expecting consideration. Nor, with his ignorance of humanity did he make allowance for the fact that other drivers, seeing all the danger signals of his indecision, would avoid him like the plague. And he was inexperienced in making lightning estimates of speed and distances; he found it difficult to judge whether he had time in hand to turn across an oncoming vehicle, or whether a gap which presented itself before him would remain open long enough for him to avail himself of it. So that during the second hour he began to feel nervous exhaustion overcoming him.

"Do you mind if we have a rest?" he asked, when they turned once more into a quiet side street.

Lenham was all contrition at once.

"Of course not," he said. "Let's stop here for a bit. You were getting on so well that I was forgetting this was only your first time out."

Pethwick pulled up carefully at the kerb, and they sat side by side in the car, while Pethwick revelled in the relief from strain and glowed warmly with this last encomium from Lenham.

"Have you seen anything of this Peacemaker business in the City?" asked Lenham.

It was an inevitable question, one which everyone interested in motor-cars was bound to ask in an idle moment. Pethwick took a grip on himself before he answered.

"Yes," he said, slowly. "Two or three times, as it happens."

"I've never been in town when it was going on," said Lenham. "But by all accounts it seems to have done the trick all right."

"Yes," said Pethwick.

"It must have held everything up properly," went on Lenham. "And we've got two cars in the garage this minute that we're having to put new magnetos into. Lucky their owners were both insured all-in."

"Can you insure against *that?*" asked Pethwick, surprised.

"Yes," said Lenham. "It was a bit of a job getting the companies to see reason, but we got them in the end under the 'civil commotion' clause. So that's all

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right. But the owners are pretty furious, all the same."

Pethwick said nothing in reply; there seemed to be nothing to say.

"I don't know how to feel about it, sir," went on Lenham at length, "but I don't think the Peacemaker's going to get very far on these lines. He's annoying people too much—putting their backs up and yet not causing quite enough trouble to be taken seriously."

Again Pethwick did not answer. He was wondering whether the new scheme he had in mind would cause enough trouble for him to be taken seriously.

"And yet I don't blame him, somehow," said Lenham, thoughtfully. "It's a fine ideal he's got before him. Armaments are a sheer waste of money and a very likely cause of trouble. People say that war's inevitable, and a natural state of man, and so on. Well, even if it's true, the country that can construct the most efficient army in peace time would also be the one which would win the war if one started when everybody was disarmed. It's—it's—I mean it's just like a race. Without armaments it would be like everyone starting from scratch. Armaments are like giving everyone a start, but the longest start to the fastest runners instead of the slower ones. Abolition wouldn't make any difference to anyone's prestige. Powerful countries would be just as safe, and weak ones just about as unsafe. I can't think what all the fuss is about."

"That's what I think," said Pethwick, carefully.

"It's a pity," said Lenham, "that the Peacemaker can't work out another invention. There's only one thing I can think of which would stop war for certain."

"And what is that?" asked Pethwick.

"Something that would kill commanders-in-chief," said Lenham. "If there was a weapon which would do that for certain, just one a day, let's say, I don't think armies would exist very long."

"Yes," said Pethwick, and hesitated. "So you don't think the Peacemaker is going to succeed?"

Lenham shook his head a little sadly.

"He *might*," he said, "if he's terrifically lucky, and very persistent, and very rich, so that he can extend his radius of action. I hope he does. But I can't believe he will—perhaps that's just because what he's after seems too good to be practicable. After all, in the old days people laughed at Jenner because they couldn't imagine a world without smallpox. Nowadays they can't picture a world without armaments, or unemployment, or hunger. But there's nothing intrinsically impossible about these ideas. He might bring them off."

They sat together in silence after that, until Lenham stirred a little restlessly. He was feeling uncomfortable at his recent self-revelation.

"Let's get going again," he said. "I want to see you go up the gears again."

And Pethwick's experimental training revealed its depth once more. Despite his abstraction, despite the warm friendly glow he felt towards Lenham, he did not make the mistake Lenham was anticipating. He took the car out of gear before he stretched out his foot to the self-starter button.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE Saturday before Bank Holiday *The Times* appeared with the contents bill and headlines—headlines that Pethwick—this much at least he had learned about the potentialities of the British Press—had almost expected. "New Manifesto from the Peacemaker," it said. "Fresh Threats."

The letter was brief, in the usual style of the Peacemaker.

Dear Sir (it said),

I am sorry that so little attention has been paid to my request for serious consideration of the question of disarmament. In consequence I propose to interfere again with the traffic of the City of London on Friday morning, as apparently it is necessary that I should have to demonstrate once more the great capacity for causing a disturbance which is at my disposal. In addition, I promise that if nothing is done soon I shall have to take further steps. They will be of the very greatest consequence, and will cause inconvenience much greater than any that has been caused up to the present.

Pethwick read the letter studiously. There was no thrill at seeing his writings printed in *The Times*. And he was conscious, vaguely, that the letter was not all it should be. But for the life of him he could not see in what it was lacking. It said everything that had to be said; there was no possible double meaning which could be read into it. Two or three of the phrases were modelled—unconsciously, it is true—on some of the more

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effective expressions employed by very successful masters at the Liverpool School when dealing with unruly classes. Yet there was no denying the fact that it caused the public to be extremely annoyed—he had only to glance at the editorial comment to see that. And the leader referred to an interview which had been granted by a Cabinet minister—as it was August, and the House was not sitting, the usual method of obtaining an official pronouncement by the aid of questions in the Commons was unavailable. Pethwick searched for the interview and found it. It was brief enough—almost as laconic as the Peacemaker's writings themselves.

"His Majesty's Government," said the minister, in reply to the questions put to him, "is not accustomed to committing itself to any policy at the dictation of obscure agitators who have not the courage to come out in the open. England has, of course, always been in favor of reduction of armaments, and is accustomed to urge this policy at every opportunity. But the government will not be deflected in the least from its course either by threats or by criminal activities."

Another article, after a description of Friday's muddle in the City, compared the Peacemaker's activities with those of the advocates of women's suffrage before the war, when windows were smashed and country houses burned and letter boxes filled with paint. These crimes had not brought the grant of women's suffrage an inch nearer. Pethwick scratched his head, and raked back in his memory for what he had learnt and the trifle he could remember about the suffrage movement.

Women had the vote now, hadn't they? There had been some excitement only a little while ago about the extension of the grant to women of twenty-one. So the movement must have succeeded at some time or other, and not very long after all these outrages catalogued here. In Pethwick's opinion it was an example of the effectiveness of outrages, not of the reverse. The inconsistency would never have been remedied if attention had not been called to it by violent action. So would it be with armaments. He was going through with it, and *The Times* could say what it liked..

He did not notice, when he rose from the table to continue the execution of his plan of campaign, how meekly Marry acquiesced in his statement that he was going out again that morning—but then he could not know that as soon as he was gone Mary pounced upon *The Times* and studied carefully what he had been reading. From her seat opposite him she had noted the position of those parts of the newspaper which had most interested him.

Pethwick walked round to Lenham's garage. There was quite a pleasant thrill about going up the alley at the back, and taking out his key, and opening the door to disclose his own motor-car. There was excitement in the prospect of driving the car all by himself, without the solid moral support of Lenham's presence, through what he knew would be thick traffic.

THE DIFFICULTIES he encountered were largely those which he had not anticipated. He made the discovery that it is by no means as easy as it appears to back a motor-car out of a narrow garage into a narrow alley. Pethwick had to climb out of the driver's seat eleven times in all, to study the relative position of wings and doorposts and walls, and to note how the front wheels were set.

He got himself into such a muddle that he had to go back and forward an inch or two at a time, nearly a score of times, before he could induce the nearside rear wing to come round clear of the wall at the same time as the nearside front wing cleared the doorpost. Even when the tip of the bumper bar scored the paint. In this particular problem his theoretical knowledge of mechanics and geometry always asserted itself just a little too late in dealing with the obstinate habit of the front end of a motor-car moving in reverse to take a larger circle than the rear end.

But he got it out at last. He was quite breathless by the time he shut the garage door and climbed up into the driver's seat for the last time. He drove carefully in bottom gear down the alley-way, and after an unconscionable wait, he managed to insert the Morris into the rush of traffic in the High Street. At a sober eighteen miles an hour he began his voyage round the suburbs. Bus-drivers cursed him, and a hatless youth in M.G.'s turned and stared, but he did not notice them—his gaze was rigidly fixed upon the stretch of road in front of him. This was the Saturday before Bank Holiday, and the pavements were crowded with shoppers at the same time as the roads were full of traffic pouring down to the seaside.

Pethwick drove with his right foot ever ready to be transferred in haste to the brake pedal: there were adventures every

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hundred yards, what with pedestrians so bent upon the business of shopping that they had no idea whether they were on the pavement or the road, and shopping housewives in cars pulling out unexpectedly from the kerb, and motor-buses to be passed when they stopped. A great, big adventure this—and the apparently impassable passage between trams and the kerb to be negotiated, and, as well as all this, stops to be made occasionally here and there. For this was no mere pleasure cruise. Pethwick was driving this car today bent upon the furtherance of the new plan.

Every stop he made was somewhere near a radio shop—not very near, in some cases, as he could never bring himself to drive across the road and it took him some time always to get in to the kerb, and there had to be fifty yards clear of parked vehicles before he could attempt it. But wherever he stopped, he made his way on foot back to the radio shop which had caught his eye, and at every shop he bought a couple of accumulators.

For this new plan of his he needed electrical power in some quantity, from a portable source, and it was only by buying accumulators and taking them about in a motor-car that he could achieve this. Half an ampere at a hundred volts would be impossible to supply in any other manner. And Pethwick was not going to call attention to himself by buying twenty-five thirty-ampere-hour accumulators at a single shop.

Yet nowadays anyone can buy a couple of accumulators without attracting special attention, and that was what Pethwick did. His route through the suburbs was blazed with thirteen stops to buy accumulators, just as a man buying poison will visit a dozen chemists' shops to obtain a sufficient supply. By the time Pethwick had finished his round the floor of the poor old Morris was completely covered with accumulators laid side by side.

Then he drove back, to the incredibly difficult operation of getting the car up the alley-way and into the garage again. His legs were all of a tremble by the time he had done it.

Even then there was still much to be done. He had to take the train up to London Bridge, and a bus from there to Hammer Court, and he had to come all the way back again with the suitcase which for ten days had lain locked in the cupboard of his office. This motoring business had one very great advantage; the garage which he had contracted to pay young Lenham eight shillings a week provided him with a secure sanctuary additional to the one at Hammer Court. He could switch on the light there and lock his door, and sit in the secure stuffiness inside and tinker with his apparatus without fear of interruption.

That was how he spent his afternoon, sitting on an old packing-case left by the preceding tenant with his feet in a puddle of oil, rewinding his armatures and adapting his condenser to the new source of current. There was in existence only one set of apparatus for the production of the Klein-Pethwick Effect, and that was incredibly crude and homemade, but it worked—recent events had proved that. In that it was like the crude but effective appliances with which Faraday had first explored the electro-magnetic world.

Now Pethwick had to alter it to suit direct current in place of alternating, a hundred volts instead of two hundred and twenty, and it took a long time with his lack of tools and in that bad light. It was late when he reached home again.

Even Pethwick was surprised at not being greeted by his wife with a storm of abuse on his eventual arrival, but the poor man was so desperately weary, so sick with hunger and fatigue, that he could draw no conclusions from her ominous silence. He did not guess at the thunder in the offing. All he was conscious of at the moment was that the work had progressed.

He had learnt to drive a car, and he had constructed an apparatus capable of being transported in that car. Whenever he chose now he could produce the Klein-Pethwick Effect—for a few hours, until his accumulators were discharged—anywhere in England that he should think proper.

The thought of that even made him smile a little, despite his miserable feeling of isolation, as he crawled into bed. He slept heavily the moment he turned over on his side, and, such was his exhaustion, he slept without movement until late on Sunday morning.

EXPERIENCE had taught Dr. Pethwick by now that if he wanted to save himself time and trouble, it was better to put the next scheme in hand while the present one was under way. Now that he was ready to carry out the "new threats" that he had uttered through the medium of *The Times* it was advisable to start preparations for

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his projected attempt upon Paris. They would call for time and tact, as he was well aware. He made the first approaches that Sunday at dinner-time. He tried to speak with supreme offhandedness.

"Would you mind very much, dear," he asked, "if I were to go away for a few days next week?"

"Mind?" said Mary. "Of course I'd mind. Not that I'd notice much difference, the way you've been leaving me alone all this week."

"I'm sorry," said Pethwick. "Dont you think you could manage without me just for a day or two?"

"I've never heard of such a thing," snapped Mary. "Where do you want to go to?"

"Well," said Pethwick, and even he hesitated. It was such a colossal innovation which he was proposing. "As a matter of fact—I want to go abroad."

"Abroad!"

The only people Mary knew who had ever crossed the Channel had done so twenty years ago, in uniforms and under government orders. The thing was unheard of, incredible. Except that—and here Mary stiffened with fright—except that *she* was abroad, at that very moment. Mary stared at Pethwick, and Pethwick looked at Mary, and failed to conceal his unease.

"Yes," said Pethwick, trying as hard as he could to keep the conversation on the level of the commonplace. "Lots of people do, you know. I want to go to Paris."

"But you can't—you can't go to *Paris*," said Mary.

She really meant that at the moment she said it. A day trip to Boulogne might perhaps have seemed possible to her, but a journey to Paris, where everyone talked French, and involving the use of French trains, and the eating of foreign messes, and ending in a place proverbial for its gaiety and wickedness, seemed to be an experience which could not possibly happen to someone whom she knew intimately.

"There doesn't seem to be any reason why I shouldn't, if you can do without me," said Pethwick.

"But how are you going to get there? What do you want to do in Paris?"

"Oh, I can go by boat and train the same as everybody else does," said Pethwick, with an apparent nonchalance which he was really far from feeling on the point. "And—Piffy's giving three lectures at the University of Paris which I want to hear. They ought to cover new ground, and I don't want to miss them."

At the last moment, when Pethwick had committed himself to this speech, he had realized that the human factor had let him down again—he had completely forgotten the name of the eminent French physicist he had intended to quote. But in the fleeting one tenth of a second allowed him he had managed to invent a name which might sound reasonable to Mary's English ear; and apparently it did.

"Piffy?"

"Yes, the man who wrote that paper on hydrostatics which I was so interested in last year."

Mary never knew what papers interested her husband; certainly she never hoped to remember anything on that subject for a year.

"But he won't lecture in English."

Pethwick grinned as assuredly as he could.

"The language of mathematics is much the same anywhere," he said. "I'll follow his blackboard work all right, and his bench demonstrations. I think it'll be worth going."

"Anyway, you can't go by yourself."

In a clairvoyant moment Pethwick realized that he had begun the conversation in the wrong way. He should have begun by inviting Mary to accompany him to Paris, and on her inevitable and indignant refusal his hands would have been free. As it was, if he were to invite her now she would accept, because that would be something different from his first proposal, and would be consequently proof of victory. And he would have no opportunity of assailing Paris traffic from a hotel bedroom if Mary were with him. He was like a general who has made a faulty deployment of his army; only by hard fighting could he hope to retrieve the initial tactical error.

"Of course I'm going," he said, indignantly.

"Not without me you're not."

"Yes, I am."

"No, you're not."

Pethwick hit the table with his fist; he tried to imitate what he thought would be the behavior of Mr. Holliday dealing with a pack of recalcitrant schoolboys.

"I'm going," he said, loudly. "Once and for all, I'm going. And I don't want you with me. You'd only be in the way and we can't afford it."

Naturally that was the point where the quarrel began. There is no need to recount the details. There were hard words said on both sides because Pethwick,

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wrought up to a pitch he had never reached before, and reacting violently from his recent overstrain, suddenly discovered that he could use hard words, and he found a savage pleasure—the greater because it was new to him—in using them.

He let fly several vicious remarks, and most of them were true enough, but they upset Mary very badly indeed. It was not long before there were tears mingled with her recriminations, and the sight of Mary in tears, instead of having its usual effect on Pethwick, made him in his present unnatural condition more vicious than ever. It ended—it would be accurate to say that it reached an apparent end—in a manner usual in domestic quarrels, although nearly unprecedented in the Pethwick family; in Pethwick rising to his feet and stalking out of the room, and out of the house, just like an ordinary husband.

Mary was left at home alone, to wipe her eyes with a wet handkerchief, and to sniff and sob herself into physical calm, with the aid of repeated journeys to the sideboard cupboard. She had the afternoon to herself, during which she could turn over in her mind all the cruel things which Pethwick had said to her. Things which hurt her the more, now that she brooded over them, because of the truth they contained. She knew now that her husband did not love her, and, what was far worse, she knew that he regarded her with as much contempt as his nature allowed him to feel towards any human being.

She might have borne with his hatred; it was the contempt that rankled and her vague feeling that the contempt was justified was the poison on the barb. There were strange thoughts, and strange resolutions forming in Mary's mind, all clouded and muddled with whisky as it was.

The instinct of self-assertion grew up in the maudlin reaction from tears. If he did not love her, then he must fear her. She would hurt him, the beast, worse than he had hurt her. He might despise her, but she would show him that she was not one to be despised. She would queer his pitch for him, put a spoke in his wheel, ruin all those fine schemes of his. And she would show him if he could go to Paris when she did not want him to.

Under the quick stimulus of whisky plans began to grow up in her mind to give effect to the resolutions already formed. They were still there next morning, when Mary came round from the stupor into which the whisky had plunged her. The stupor in which Pethwick had found her on his return from the visit he had made to Chelsea, whither he had gone to inspect the lie of the land round about Lots Road power station.

BANK HOLIDAY dawned bright and fair. There had never been a summer like this in human memory. Every day for weeks now there had been blue skies and scorching sunshine. Despite—or perhaps because of—all the uncertainty in the air, despite the wobbling foreign exchanges, and the menacing political outlook; despite unemployment and financial stringency, people were spending more money on holidays and amusements than they had ever spent before. The call of the seaside had become, under the influence of that beneficent sunshine, too insistent to resist. Every day there had been a stream of motor-cars pouring out of London seeking the sea, and on this day, the height and summit of the holiday season, the stream was redoubled.

Not merely on the roads was this the case. The railways, too, were doing better business than they had know for years. On Bank Holiday evening there were tens of thousands of people pouring back into the London termini. There were all the day trippers, to start with. Then there were the people who had been away for the week-end. Then there were all the canny people who had chosen their week's holiday or their fortnight's holiday so that it terminated at Bank Holiday week-end and thereby gained an extra precious day.

As darkness fell all these hosts of people encumbered with tired, whimpering children, with trunks and suitcases, with spades and pails and golf clubs and tennis rackets and bags and bundles and baskets, all came back to London. At the termini the lucky ones with a few shillings to spare, the careful ones who had made provision for this in their budget for the holiday, climbed into taxicabs. Others got into trams and buses. But the larger half used the underground trains; the underground management's passenger graphs showed a most unusual "peak" at nine-thirty on Bank Holiday evening.

When at first the trains stopped and the lights went out the crowds displayed in nearly every case a praiseworthy freedom from panic. They endured the darkness and the stuffiness with British stolidity. But the hold-up was quite general. Throughout the London district there was not an underground train in motion, not

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a glimmer of light, not a lift nor escalator working.

The railway staff rose to the emergency as far as was in their power. In the stations emergency lamps were lit, and in the places where trains had stopped in or very near stations the crowds were extricated without much damage and guided in the glimmer of the oil lamps and electric torches up the never-ending stairs to the surface, dragging their suitcases and their babies and their golf clubs with them. There were a good many pockets picked, and everyone was exasperated—infuriated—by this climax to a tiring day.

But in two trains far from stations the business was very much worse indeed. It was stifling hot in the trains, and pitchy dark—darker, perhaps, than those town-bred people had ever known in all their experience. Here and there in the darkness voices made themselves heard—the voices of those inevitable people who always arise in an emergency and shout out, "Keep calm! Keep calm!" and do nothing else to allay the panic such cries are bound to arouse. Sometimes women fainted, and anxious husbands began to elbow in the crowd in order to find room to administer to them. Sometimes frightened, overtired children began to cry, and from crying passed on to screaming, when their mothers had not the nerve and tact to comfort them by an apparent freedom from anxiety.

So in these trains there was disgraceful panic, during which in the pitch darkness maddened crowds surged up and down the long carriages. Nobody could have said what he was frightened about, but everyone was pushing, fighting, scrambling to get out of the trains. There were children trampled to death in those carriages—pitiful little things who stood no chance once they were caught in the alley-way between the seats. There were mothers who died there, too, trying to hold the madmen back from the bodies of their children. In places people tore open the doors and fell to the ground with others piling on top of them; ribs and legs were smashed, and the long dark tunnels were filled with screams of agony.

It was only for an hour that the trouble endured, but in that hour four lives were lost and a hundred were injured. At the end of that hour the lights suddenly came on again, and the trains began to pick their way cautiously along the lines, as soon as the heaps of injured had been cleared from the way, while Pethwick, ignorant of the deaths he had caused, drove the Morris away slowly from Tadema Road and over Battersea Bridge.

He had pushed his way cautiously through the Bank Holiday traffic in the failing light. It had occurred to him that he must not on any account whatever risk a smash with its subsequent disclosure of the contents of his motor-car. The weight of the accumulators on the floor-boards made the car sluggish in its acceleration although easier to handle in other respects, and overtaking was consequently difficult to him. Most of the way to Battersea Bridge he was crawling behind motor-buses, only passing them at the stops, and then only occasionally.

Tadema Road was the site he had chosen for his motor-car; from there he could rake the whole long line of generators, whose position could easily be deduced from the lay-out of the power-station. It was almost dark when he reached the place he had in mind, and halted the car as far as possible from the nearest street lamp. Kneeling on the front seat he leant over into the body of the car and made the final connections. He trained the emitter upon the power-station, and closed the switch. The make-and-break began its gentle buzz, but that sound was drowned in the roar which went up from the power-station, audible even in Tadema Road.

For under the influence of the Klein-Pethwick Effect the huge magnets in the dynamos lost their magnetism, and instantly the armatures ceased to experience the retarding drag upon them caused by the magnetic field—the drag which is overcome in doing the work which is converted into electricity. Freed from this load, the armatures raced round; the steam engines began to race too. At each generator the automatic governors, spinning round at twice their designed speed, began to lift the safety valves.

In the instant the whole power-station was plunged into darkness and bathed in escaping steam, through which the thunderstruck staff tried to grope their way. They were trained to deal with emergencies, but they were not prepared for this total, complete failure, nor for this crippling darkness. And however good their training, there was nothing they could do now, with every single generator as useless as scrap metal.

The engineers discovered the cause of the trouble almost instantly; indeed, no one could very well miss that complete lack of magnetism in the dynamos. Im-

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mediately they began to try to telephone—but most of the telephones were useless, caught in the all-embracing sweep of the Klein-Pethwick Effect. Even telephones contain magnets. The management sent messengers on foot helter-skelter through the streets. Pethwick saw them go by, running madly along the dark pavements. But they paid no attention to the shabby old Morris car waiting beside the kerb, nor to the driver sitting immoble at his wheel, the quiet running of the engine quite drowning the purr of the make-and-break in the body of the car behind him.

AT THE end of an hour Pethwick switched off his instruments, put the Morris into gear, and drove slowly towards home. It was late now, and he was mortally tired. He had no knowledge of how much harm he had done; he could only guess that he had caused a complete suspension of traffic on the underground. His imagination had not been extensive enough to visualize the dead children and the injured women.

He crept over Battersea Bridge and plunged into the suburban main roads on his way back to the garage. His fatigue was such that he had to be even more careful than usual in the traffic and it was with pathetic relief that he swung the Morris up the alley-way at the back of Lenham's Service Station.

Perhaps it was fatigue; perhaps fatigue merely accentuated the sheer unhandiness of the motoring beginner, but Pethwick got himself into a terrible muddle while trying to induce the Morris to go into the garage. The car behaved with the maddening obstinacy of mechanism in unskilful hands. Pethwick backed and went forward; he sawed the wheel round first this way and then that, but do what he could he could not prevail upon the car to make a neat clearance of the side of the garage doorway.

In the end—it was really only to be expected—there came the moment when he trod heavily on the accelerator instead of on to the brake, and with a rasp and a crackle the side pillar crumpled up the near side wing and bit into the running board. It was not a very bad scrape, but it made matters hopeless for Pethwick. It seemed as if he would never free the car. Whether he tried to go back or forward the doorpost jarred up against the side and stopped the engine. Pethwick was nearly frantic with mortification and fatigue.

Then, while he was out of the car trying to rally himself and to work out scientifically how to set about the job there came a blaze of light around the corner of the alley-way and another motor-car halted at the sight of the tangle.

"You seem to have hit a spot of trouble, sir," said Lenham's voice.

Pethwick heard Lenham's car door slam as he got out to inspect, and Lenham came striding up.

"Oh, it's not as bad as it looks," said Lenham. "That running-board will spring straight as soon as it's free. Here—"

Before Pethwick could stop him—presumably Pethwick's reactions were slowed up by his fatigue—Lenham had pulled open the door and sat himself in the driver's seat. He started the engine, put pressure on the steering-wheel, let in the clutch, and lo! the car swung away from the door post. A second later it was gliding into the garage as if it had never displayed a trace of mulish obstinacy in its life.

There was an odd look on Lenham's face as he climbed out of the car again. Pethwick was staring at him in fascinated horror. No one sitting in that car in a lighted garage could have missed seeing the contents and no one of Lenham's training could have seen the accumulators ranged on the floor and the instruments on the back seat without guessing their purpose. And Lenham had heard already that the Peacemaker had been at work that evening at Lots Road, although he had heard no details. Pethwick knew now the sick fear of discovery.

But Lenham apparently had noticed nothing. After the first glance he looked away until Pethwick had time to compose his expression. Maybe Lenham approved of the Peacemaker's aims and methods; it might merely be that Lenham was too fond of Pethwick to accuse him; conceivably Lenham was one of those people who can mind their own business. However it was, Lenham said nothing whatever about the contents of the car. He peered down at the running-board.

"That's all right," he said, and shook it. "There doesn't seem to be any real damage done. You've spoilt that wing, of course, but you must expect to spoil a wing or two while you're learning. Just remember, sir, don't go more than a foot at a time until you're quite sure what the car's going to do. Well, good night, sir."

"Good night," said Pethwick.

He stood still in the lighted garage; he

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heard Lenham start up his car again, run it in, and slam and lock the door. Only when his footsteps died away down the alley did he break again into activity, dismantling his apparatus and packing it away hurriedly in the suitcase which had stood there ever since he had brought it down from Hammer Court. Then, bending under its weight, he started to carry it home.

There could be no using his apparatus in his motor-car again until he had the accumulators charged up, which he would have to have done two by two as he had bought them, and that would have to wait until his return from Paris. Despite his sick apprehension he could not force his mind to think about whether or not Lenham would betray him. All he could do was to go on doggedly with the plans he had laid.

PETHWICK had been right in his assumption that *The Times* would penetrate into whatever recess in Norway that the Laxtons had chosen for their holiday. Four copies together reached Mr. Henry Laxton and his daughter as they sat together at supper-time.

Mr. Laxton had a keen appetite for supper, which was sharpened rather than dulled by the knowledge of what he was going to eat—the trout which he had caught that afternoon, and a loin of delicious mountain mutton. He had already made the remark on sitting down to table which he had made eight times before, that the flat biscuits of Norwegian rye bread were the ideal accompaniment to fresh caught trout, and he was about to make the remark he had made seven times before. It was to the effect that he could not understand how English biscuit manufacturers dared to charge the prices they did for the inferior substitutes which they made in England and advertised so extensively.

What saved Dorothy from having to listen to this and express the polite surprise which she had expressed seven times already was the arrival of the day's mail, brought by the postman on his bicycle with the clanging bell. And included in the mail were those four copies of *The Times*. Mr. Laxton fell upon them with the ardor of an exile.

He was not selfish with his newspapers, either. Although he liked to have an untouched newspaper to open, and to feel quite sure that his were the first eyes to rest upon the print inside, he did not mind Dorothy picking up the copies as he discarded them after a first hurried skimming through. A fussier father might have insisted on her waiting until he had completed the serious reading of them, which he proposed to carry out after supper.

"It's extraordinary the things even *The Times* publishes nowadays," said Mr. Laxton, testily, putting down the first copy and reaching for the second.

Dorothy said nothing—it was the sort of remark to which it is hard to find a reply—and took up the discarded paper.

"It's perfectly fantastic," said Mr. Laxton. "It just shows where pacifism leads to."

But Dorothy said nothing at all. She had sat up rigid in her chair, for the headlines in her copy of *The Times* were those which announced the Peacemaker's "manifesto."

"Rubbish!" said Mr. Laxton, quite exasperated. He put his copy of *The Times* down beside him with a smack; the gesture was doubly *a propos*, because the loin of mutton was brought in at that moment, and besides expressing his amazement at the condition of the modern world, it enabled him to attend to the carving.

"Good gracious!" said Mr. Laxton. "Haven't you finished your trout yet?"

There was no answer; all Dorothy did was to drop the first copy of *The Times* in a muddle on the floor and reach for the second. Mr. Laxton regarded these actions with distaste.

"No," said Dorothy, still reading *The Times*.

Mr. Laxton smacked the loin of mutton with the flat of the carving knife.

"Dorothy!" he said. "Put that paper *down* and attend to your supper."

Dorothy dropped the second number of *The Times* in a muddle on top of the first, and took up the sacred unopened third one. Mr. Laxton eyed her as though he could not believe what he saw. He was on the point of an explosion, but his good sense restrained him. The only Englishman in a village of foreigners, cooped up in a three-room inn, will not readily quarrel with the only English woman, even if she is only his daughter.

He gesticulated to the maid to take away Dorothy's plate with the neglected trout, and addressed himself in silence to carving the joint. Dorothy dropped the third copy of *The Times* in a muddle upon the second and took up the fourth. Mr. Laxton carved her portion, and his own, and began philosophically to eat the latter in

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silence. Then Dorothy dropped the fourth copy of *The Times* upon the muddle on the floor, and then made the muddle worse by snatching up a page of it again to see the date.

"What's the date today?" snapped Dorothy, her eyes looking straight through her father's head and through the wall behind him. "The sixth?"

Dorothy looked at her watch and stood up.

"I'm going home," she said, still with that strange far-away look in her eyes.

"But you can't," said Mr. Laxton. He was not referring to physical obstacles; he only meant that it was morally impossible for a woman to leave an untasted loin of mutton and walk at a moment's notice out of an inn in a Norwegian fishing village en route for a London suburb.

"Rolfsen's got a motor-boat," said Dorothy, to no one in particular, and looking at her watch again. "He'll take me round to Leka if I pay him enough. It's daylight nearly all night. With luck I'll get the local steamer there—just. I'll be in Oslo tomorrow. I'll have to hurry."

With that, Dorothy proceeded to do just what Mr. Laxton had recently visualized as utterly impossible—she walked out of the room, leaving her mutton behind and started for the beach.

"Dorothy!" said Mr. Laxton, plunging after her. "Dorothy! You can't go like this!"

Dorothy did not appear to hear him.

"You haven't got any luggage," said Mr. Laxton wildly. "Why, you haven't even got a hat and coat."

For the first time Dorothy noticed him.

"Then go and get my hat and coat," she snapped at him over her shoulder. "Quick! I'll go and find Rolfsen."

EVEN a man who had commanded a brigade on the Western Front had to yield obedience under the double shock of surprise and this abrupt issuing of orders. Mr. Laxton turned back to find the hat and coat. When he reached the beach with them he found that Dorothy had already routed Rolfsen out from his home and had dragged him down to the little pier. She was saying, "Leka, Leka," and pointing to the motor-boat, and displaying a sheaf of hundred-kronen notes. There was no need for any dumb show to indicate her desire for hurry; no one could look at her without being aware of it.

Laxton could only stand by while Rolfsen gradually realized what Dorothy wanted. A light of intelligence dawned upon his stolid face. He nodded and smiled, took some of the notes and handed the rest back to her. Then he jumped with his clumsy boots into the rocking motor-boat and stood waiting for her.

Dorothy took her hat and coat from her father and prepared to jump in. Laxton looked round him wildly, at the towering cliffs of the fjord, at the blue water and the blue sky, and the red evening sun, as if he doubted even the reality of these things.

"Dorothy!" he said. "You can't go like this. What is it all about?"

For answer Dorothy put her hand in Rolfsen's and sprang down into the boat among the fish scales. Rolfsen addressed himself to starting up his motor, while the assembled village began to cast off the painters.

"Dorothy!" said Laxton, in one final appeal. Then he yielded to the current madness. "Look here, you can't go by yourself. I'll come with you."

For answer the motor burst into a roar.

"I don't want you," said Dorothy clearly. Rolfsen leaped to the tiller, and the boat surged away from the pier. It roared down the bay, pitching as it met the ocean swell. Then it disappeared from sight as it rounded the headland, and Laxton was left alone on the pier, with a wondering village eyeing him, and a congealing loin of mutton still waiting him up at the inn.

Dorothy sat among the fish scales; her knuckles were white with the tightness of her grip upon the thwart.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry," she said to herself, and the motor roared its encouragement. The wind even on this glorious day was cold out at sea, and soon there were splashes of spray coming in over the bow, but Dorothy noticed neither. All she could think of was Pethwick in London, with a problem of world-wide importance on his hands, facing enormous difficulties and enormous perils, without a friend at his side.

She had forgotten his unfaithfulness; never once during that whole mad journey did she think about the Pethwick child that was soon to be born. She could only think of Pethwick encountering a rising tide of public indignation and public savagery. She did not even think about disarmament; it was only Pethwick. She must not leave him unbefriended in this crisis.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry," she said.

The blue sea changed to grey as the sun

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dipped lower. Rolfsen, at the tiller, lit his pipe and held his oilskin closer to him. The cliffs of the coastline dwindled and diminished as the boat cut a chord across the shallow arc of the land, and the boat began to pitch more wildly still. Soon Dorothy was sick. She clutched the thwart and vomited hideously, but not even the miseries of sea-sickness could make her forget the need for speed, and Pethwick's need for comfort and succour. The hours went by, and the cliffs began to grow larger again as the boat approached the land.

Close on the port side they passed a long reef of rocks, over which the sea boiled in white fury, and then Rolfsen put the tiller over and headed direct for the shore, steering apparently for an unbroken line of cliffs. But in half an hour the mouth of a fjord became apparent, and ten minutes after that they were swinging round the headland.

As they opened up the length of the fjord Rolfsen spoke for the first time and pointed ahead. It was the local steamer which he indicated; she had cast off from the pier and was leading down the bay. Dorothy beat her hands together frantically, and Rolfsen nodded reasurrance. He turned the boat a trifle, and, leaping on the thwart, he bellowed like a bull across the quiet water.

There was a bustle on deck, and five minutes later the boat surged up alongside the steamer, to where a rope ladder was waiting. With a kick and a struggle Dorothy scrambled on to the low deck, under the eyes of the Norwegian fisherwives and German tourists and the supercilious gaze of the inevitable couple of English people to be found on any deck anywhere in August.

That was well so far, but when Dorothy reached Oslo in the afternoon there was delay. There was nothing—not even an aeroplane—to help her on her way to England until next morning. The travel agencies were sympathetic but firm. Dorothy had to spend the night in an hotel, trying to sleep, but failing, and catching herself saying to herself every five minutes, "Hurry, hurry, hurry—" all unavailingly.

The morning brought her a far more recent copy of *The Times*, Saturday's edition, only two days old, and in it she read of the "Fresh Threats" by the Peacemaker, and of the universal condemnation of the Peacemaker's methods. She guessed that Pethwick must be in serious danger. He must be in need of counsel and advice and friendship. There was never a doubt in her mind but that he was playing a lone hand, pitting his own unaided efforts against the world. All her knowledge as a student of history told her of the fate of the men who had tried to impose reform by force—Joseph II, of Austria, was the one she had most clearly in mind—and she had no doubt, now, as to Pethwick's ultimate failure.

And his failure would put him in serious danger, danger of violence, of prison. He would be held up to the scorn and derision of the world, her father would dismiss him from the staff of the Liverpool School, and he would be plunged into poverty and starvation. Her only thought was that she must be by his side.

THE afternoon found her on board the steamer for England, dreadfully tired, horribly sea-sick, fretting herself to rags as the steamer ploughed its slow way through the fog, with the siren continuously sounding. When at last, after miserable delays, she set foot on English ground again, almost the first sight to meet her eyes were the ranged placards of the bookstall. "Peacemaker Causes Deaths," said one. "Find the Peacemaker!" said another.

She bought every paper she could find, and read them feverishly in the train from Humber to London. The first headlines she read stared at her from the page in words of doom. "The Innocent Blood," she read. Then followed a lurid account of last night's panic in the Tube trains; it described the murdered children and the injured women, the madness and the confusion which had overwhelmed London on Bank Holiday evening, the most important holiday in the working people's year. No words could be too bad for the man who had caused all this damage; Dorothy glanced feverishly through column after column of fierce condemnation.

Dorothy bitterly told herself, as she read, that the hidden powers opposed to disarmament were rallying, and directing this offensive upon the Peacemaker. She tried to assure herself that all this was merely so much propaganda, to be discounted as heavily as all propaganda should be discounted, but she found no comfort in that.

The next newspaper was the one which had said "Find the Peacemaker!" on its contents bill. The words were repeated as a headline on the front page. This paper called upon the people of England, and more especially the people of London, to hunt down this slayer of children.

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Some historically well-read person on the staff instanced the case of Napoleon on the island of Lobau, at the crossing of the Danube, who paraded his whole army at the news that there were spies present, and ordered every man to look at the man on his right and the man on his left, and to call his officer if either appeared suspicious. Every spy in the ranks was at once detected by this means, and—as the article accentuated with bloodthirsty cunning—every spy was promptly shot.

The people of London must do the same. As the Peacemaker must be somewhere in London, let everyone consider deeply whether his neighbor on the right or his neighbor on the left might be he. Hotel proprietors, lodging-house keepers, house agents, all must make the same effort. The newspaper contemplated the consequent reign of terror which would probably take place with equanimity, much as a year or two before it had seen no harm in the possible institution of a dictatorship. The Peacemaker must be routed out, taken, and punished.

The article went on to find satisfaction in the fact that this freak of the Peacemaker's had exasperated everybody so much that the paper was confident that everyone would organize to catch him.

There was this point to be made quite clear, that the law of England contained no punishment fitting for the miscreant. It was quite possible that justice might in this case miscarry, and if the Peacemaker fell into the hands of the police he might get off with some absurd sentence like five years. That would be intolerable; the newspaper yearned for the existence of laws like those of Henry VIII, which contemplated burning or boiling alive as usual events. Men who committed robbery with violence were to this day flogged as well as imprisoned. Ethically, the Peacemaker was as guilty as they; had he not tried by violence to rob the English people of their most sacred possession, constitutional government? Let everyone bear this well in mind.

Dorothy put down the newspaper; she felt sick again, and not sea-sick or train-sick, either. The very next newspaper she picked up was the evening paper under the same ownership as the one she had just been reading, and this, too, bore the headline "Find the Peacemaker." It announced with triumph that the suggestion made that morning to form organizations to hunt down the Peacemaker had met with enthusiastic praise. Already there were such organizations being formed; they quoted examples in the City, in Crouch End, in Acton.

That showed that the heart of the English people was as sound as ever, and was not enfeebled by all this poisonous Pacifist stuff which had lamentably got into circulation lately. There could be no doubt that before very long the Peacemaker would be laid by the heels and would meet with his deserts, and England would have triumphantly freed herself from the suspicion, under which she labored in the eyes of other nations, that she was tainted with the desire for disarmament, with Pacifism, and with similar Bolshevist doctrines.

Dorothy's mouth tightened into a hard line. She knew the day had come when the label "Pacifist" could be applied to a man as a term of reproach, just as in other days it was usual to style one's opponent as Radicals, or Methodists, or Atheists, or Mormons.

Yet Dorothy did not follow up this line of thought. The historical development of the movement in favor of disarmament meant little to her at the moment. All she wanted was to be at Pethwick's side. She found herself sitting forward in the railway carriage, with the piled-up newspapers round her, her elbows on her knees, saying to herself, "Hurry, hurry, hurry." The rhythm of the train beat out a monotonous chorus.

At the terminus she was the first out of the train, the first into a taxicab. She gave the driver Pethwick's address. What she was going to do there she had not the least idea, but she would not endure a moment's delay before seeing him. Her clothes were crushed and shabby with travel, and she felt filthy, but, although the idea occurred to her, she would not go home first to change. She tried ineffectively to brush herself clean with her hands as they drove through the streets.

The taxicab slithered on the tramlines of the familiar High Street; it passed Lenham's garage and the Library, and then Dorothy had to put her head out of the window to direct the driver to turn up Verulam Road. Verulam Road was thick with people, and as they reached the corner of Launceton Avenue Dorothy knew she had arrived too late.

IT IS ironical that a woman like Mary Pethwick should have twice diverted the course of the history of the world; that by one betrayal she should have

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brought the Peacemaker into being, and by another have annihilated him. Even Judas had only the one opportunity. But her husband had exasperated her beyond all endurance. On Bank Holiday he had been out until very late at night, and condescended to no attempt at explaining his absence at a moment when Mary would rather have been told the lie she was expecting than that she should be so ignored. And on the Tuesday following Bank Holiday, on the 8th of August, his behavior was worse still. Immediately after reading *The Times* at breakfast he had plunged from the room.

Mary had found him afterwards walking around the house, wandering from room to room, into her kitchen, up and down the hallway, up and down the stairs, until she was furious with him, and yet he had said no word to her. She had scolded him sharply for getting in her way, and elicited no reply. Then he went up into the spare bedroom, which was such an unusual thing for him to do that she followed him there, as was only to be expected, and demanded what in the world he wanted there.

And then at last he had turned on her, with his face as white as a sheet and distorted with some emotion or other, and he had taken her by the shoulders as though to shake her. But on the instant he had calmed himself and had merely turned her round and pushed her gently out of the room, and not before she had caught sight of a brand-new suitcase which she had never seen before.

The door was shut upon her before she could ask why or wherefore, and of course it was a point on which she demanded information. She could not be expected to tolerate the presence in the house of an unexplained suitcase, especially when her husband had earlier announced his unalterable decision to go to Paris soon. She tried to open the door to ask questions, but Pethwick held it against her, and when she pushed upon it he turned the key in the lock.

Mary could not bear to be locked out of anywhere. The bare thought of it drove her perfectly frantic. She beat upon the door with her fists; she even went downstairs and brought up the coal hammer and battered ineffectually with that, chipping off the paint and denting the wood, but not effecting an entrance. It was maddening that her husband should lock himself in there away from her, where she could not see what he was doing, and the more she went to the sideboard cupboard the more frightened she became.

In the end it was perfectly excusable, considering her condition, that she should put on her shabby hat and her unbrushed coat and go out to where she could find comfort, and where, sitting in the comfortable bar, she could whisper what she wanted to say to someone else, who at first smiled and did not believe her, but who, on her repeated and vehement assurances, gradually became convinced, and convinced to such an extent that in the end he rose up and went out through the swinging doors to carry the word.

And the dark planning which had reached its maturity thus in Mary's mind had been cunning and well-timed. She had chosen the right recipient for the news, so that although the word was passed from mouth to mouth all through that long afternoon, no whisper reached the police. It was only when evening came that it even reached the newspaper men, and then it was too late.

All through that afternoon Mary sat downstairs, only near drunk, while Pethwick remained locked in the spare bedroom, mourning the dead children, face to face with failure, trying most desperately hard to decide what he should do next. He had set his mind to the task, and he was not the type which withdraws when the work is only half completed. But to carry on, in face of the rising tide of hatred—which even *The Times* indicated, although he had seen nothing of the inflammatory articles in the cheaper press—and with the knowledge that he had killed little children, seemed just as difficult.

He was desperately miserable; he seemed quite unable to come to any decision or to form any plan. It was not until late in the day that in desperation, to distract his tortured mind, he laid out his apparatus on the floor, and got out his long sheaf of calculations and tried to concentrate upon continuing the mathematical side of his investigations. He hoped that an hour or two of higher mathematics would clear his brain, or would, at any rate, tire it so that this torturing river of thought would cease.

Mary was ready to open the door to them when they came, half a dozen of them up the path to knock on the door and a dozen more waiting on the pavement outside. Only half of them were hooligans, street book-makers' runners and such-like; the others were high-spirited young men of unimpeachable record, and the youngest

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was Henry Laxton, junior, bronzed and fit from his period at the O.T.C. camp. They were not going to kill Pethwick; they only intended to take him out and duck him in the lake on the common, just to teach him a lesson before the police got hold of him.

"I was expecting you boys," said Mary, when she opened the door. "He's upstairs —locked himself in this morning. That room."

THEY went up the stairs and knocked on the door.

"We want you, Pethwick," said the quiet leader, and at the sound of the strange voice Pethwick rose and opened the door.

They took him by the arms and dragged him out, not resisting very much, with on his face the half-hearted, good-natured smile he had worn as a boy when he had been ragged at school. The circumstances seemed just the same to him, and the memory of those times came flooding back to him.

They brought him downstairs, and as they led him into the street the quiet leader said to the hooligans:

"There are all his infernal machines upstairs. See that nothing's left of them."

And on that invitation they poured up the stairs and they pounded his apparatus to pieces, and they took all his pages of closely written calculations and tore them into fragments and piled them on the floor and set fire to them, and, their appetite for destruction growing, they ranged through the house, breaking open drawers, and every scrap of paper they found they piled upon the flames, with broken furniture, until they had set the whole house well alight, so that when the fire engine arrived the firemen had to complete the destruction of all Pethwick's work in extinguishing the flames with their hoses and their chemicals.

Out in the street they led Pethwick towards the common. But now the news spread like wildfire that they had caught the Peacemaker. People came pouring out of their houses. From the slums on the other side of the High Street came more hooligans, running and shouting. Some of them remembered the happy war-time days when German bakers and linen-drapers had had their shops sacked. The streets filled with a yelling crowd of mischief-makers and of exasperated people, in the midst of which Pethwick was borne along, now and again lifted off his feet by the press. It is not known who it was that threw the first stone, but it is to be hoped that it was somebody without sin. It struck Pethwick on the cheek, and the blood poured down, and the crowd yelled.

That was when Dorothy saw him, head and shoulders above the crowd, the blood on his cheek. But on his face was still the same dazed, good-natured smile. She could comfort herself, *afterwards*, with the thought that he was unafraid. Then into the mob came charging the half-dozen rescuers with young Lenham at their head —Lenham had heard the news, and his dark face was set hard with his determination not to let Pethwick suffer.

There were blows struck, and the mob surged and eddied this way and that, and Pethwick went down among the trampling feet, and rose again, bruised and dazed, until someone unknown, in the press of the battle, struck him down again with a coward's blow, so that he fell once beneath the feet of the mob pouring over him in their aimless riot for five wild minutes, until the police at last came fighting their way up Verulam Road. He was still breathing when they found him, but not for long.

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946, of Famous Fantastic Mysteries, published bi-monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1947. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Harold S. Goldsmith, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of Famous Fantastic Mysteries, and the the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations), printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, All Fiction Field, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Editor, Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none; Business Manager, Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: All Fiction Field, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y., Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Shirley M. Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner, and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds or other securities than as so stated by him. Harold S. Goldsmith, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of October, 1947. Eva M. Walker, Notary Public, New York County Clerk's No. 40, Register's No. 363-W-8. (My commission expires March 30, 1948.) [Seal]—Form 3526—Rev. 7-46.

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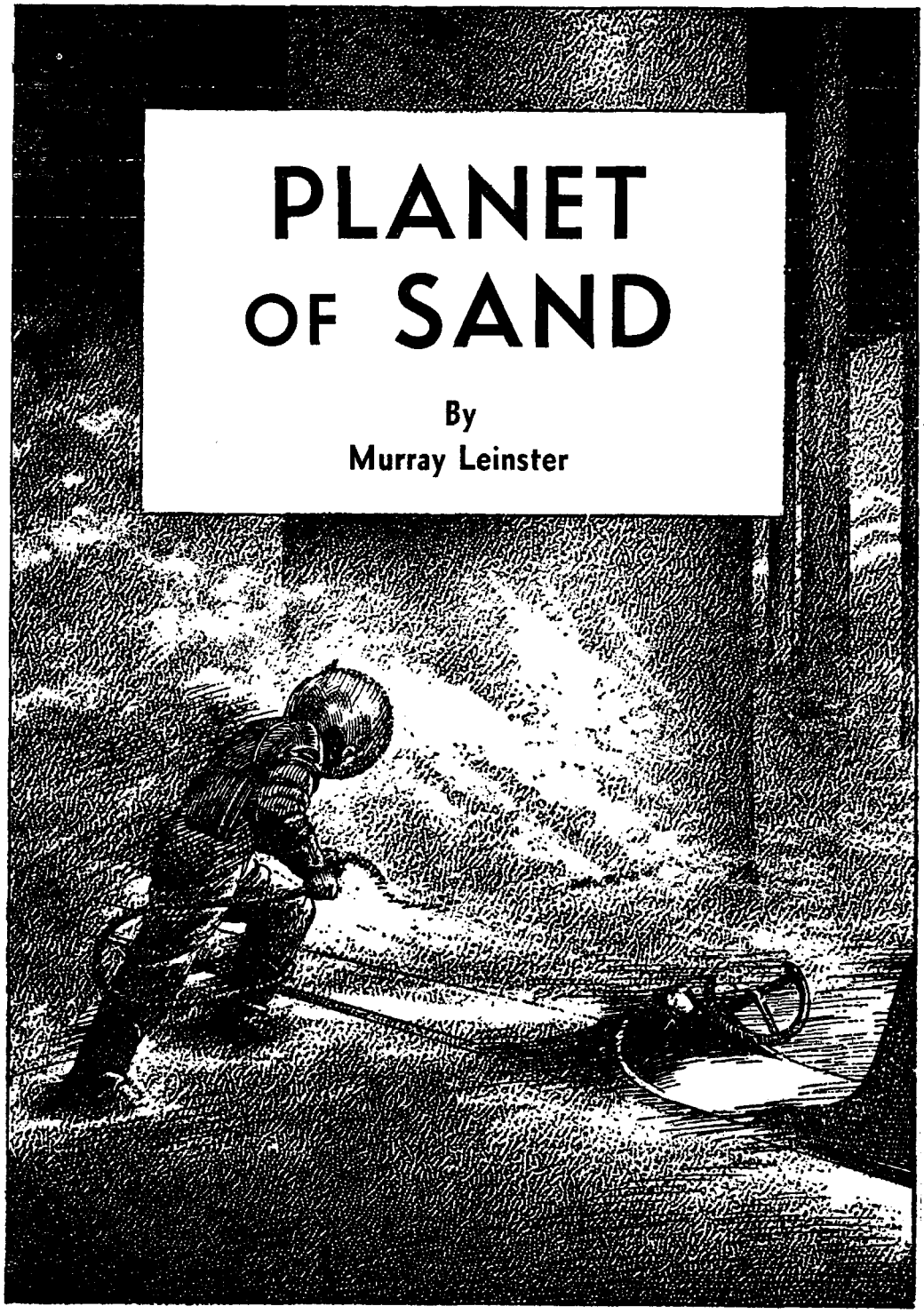
PLANET OF SAND

By
Murray Leinster



He debated struggling farther under the shelter of the monstrous roof. . . .

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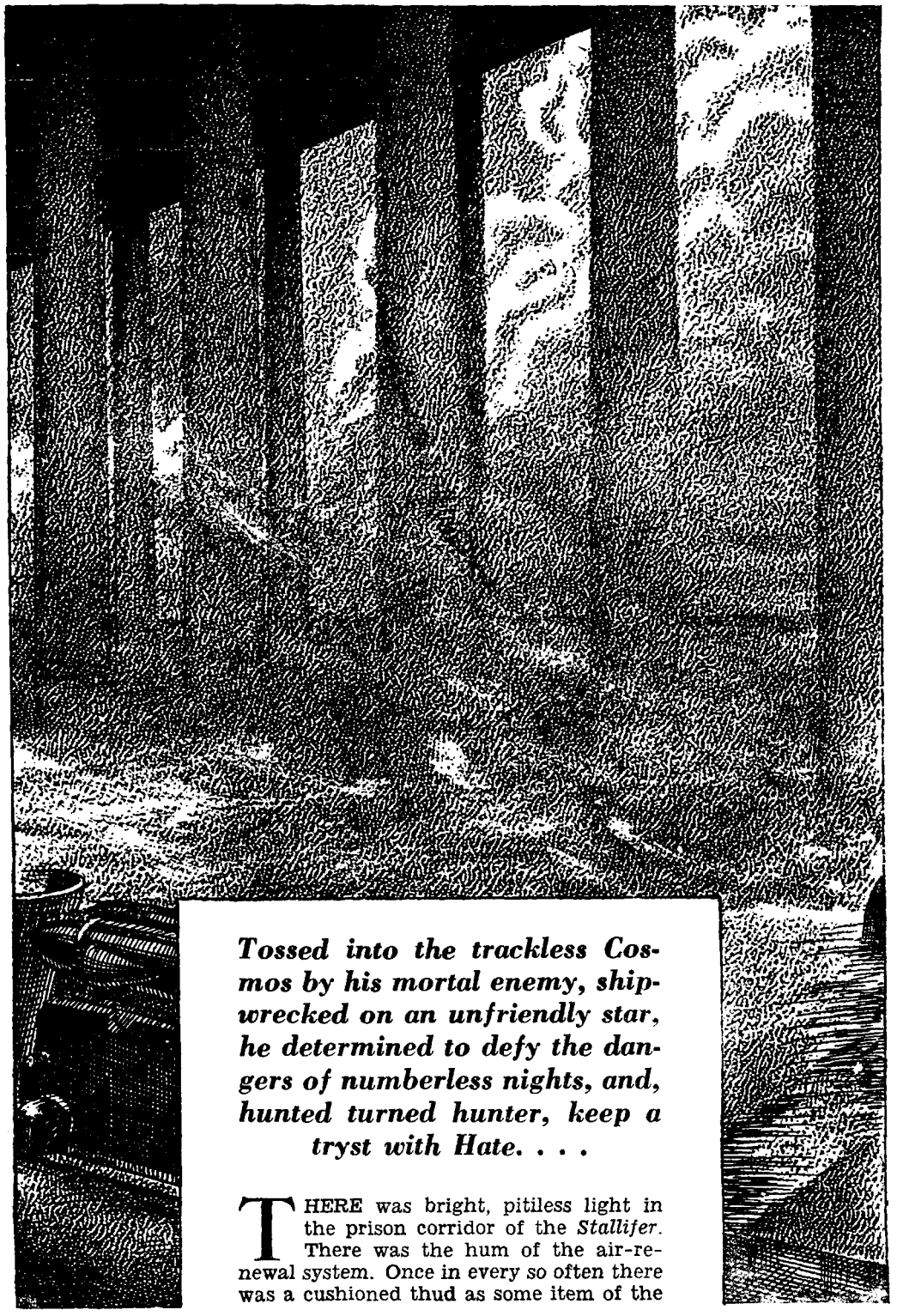

Tossed into the trackless Cosmos by his mortal enemy, shipwrecked on an unfriendly star, he determined to defy the dangers of numberless nights, and, hunted turned hunter, keep a tryst with Hate. . . .

THERE was bright, pitiless light in the prison corridor of the *Stallifer*. There was the hum of the air-renewal system. Once in every so often there was a cushioned thud as some item of the

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space ship's machinery operated some relay somewhere. But it was very tedious to be in a confinement cell. Stan Buckley—lieutenant, J.G., Space Guard, under charges and under restraint—found it rather more than tedious.

He should have been upheld, perhaps, by the fact that he was innocent of the charges made against him by Rob Torren, formerly his immediate superior officer. But the feeling of innocence did not help. He sat in his cell, holding himself still with a grim resolution. But a deep, a savage, a corrosive anger grew and grew and grew within him. It had been growing in just this manner for weeks.

The *Stallifer* bored on through space. From her ports the cosmos was not that hostile, immobile curtain of unwinking stars the early interstellar travelers knew. At twelve hundred light-speeds, with the Bowdoin-Hall field collapsing forty times per second for velocity control, the stars moved visibly. Forty glimpses of the galaxy about the ship in every second made it seem that the universe was always in view.

And the stars moved. The nearer ones moved swiftly and the farther ones more slowly, but all moved. And habit made motion give the feeling of perspective, so that the stars appeared to be distributed in three dimensions and from the ship seemed very small, like fireflies. All the cosmos seemed small and almost cosy. The Rim itself appeared no more than a few miles away. But the *Stallifer* headed for Earth from Rhesi II, and she had been days upon her journey, and she had come a distance which it would stagger the imagination to compute.

In his cell, though, Stan Buckley could see only four walls. There was no variation of light; no sign of morning or night or afternoon. At intervals, a guard brought him food. That was all—except that his deep and fierce and terrible anger grew until it seemed that he would go mad with it.

He had no idea of the hour or the day when, quite suddenly, the pitiless light in the corridor dimmed. Then the door he had not seen since his entrance into the prison corridor clanked open. Footsteps came toward his cell. It was not the guard who fed him. He knew that much. It was a variation of routine which should not have varied until his arrival on Earth.

He sat still, his hands clenched. A figure loomed outside the cell door. He looked up coldly. Then fury so great as almost to be frenzy filled him. Rob Torren looked in at him.

There was silence. Stan Buckley's muscles tensed until it seemed that the bones of his body creaked. Then Rob Torren said caustically:

"It's lucky there are bars, or there'd be no chance to talk! Either you'd kill me and be beamed for murder, or I'd kill you and Esther would think me a murderer. I've come to get you out of this if you'll accept my terms."

Stan Buckley made an inarticulate, growling noise.

"Oh, surely!" said Rob Torren. "I denounce you, and I'm the witness against you. At your trial, I'll be believed and you won't. You'll be broken and disgraced. Even Esther wouldn't marry you under such circumstances. Or maybe," he added sardonically, "maybe you wouldn't let her!"

Stan Buckley licked his lips. He longed so terribly to get his hands about his enemy's throat that he could hardly hear his words.

"The trouble is," said Rob Torren, "that she probably wouldn't marry me either, if you were disgraced by my means. So I offer a bargain. I'll help you to escape—I've got it all arranged—on your word of honor to fight me. A duel. To the death." His eyes were hard. His tone was hard. His manner was almost contemptuous. Stan Buckley said hoarsely:

"I'll fight you anywhere, under any conditions!"

"The conditions," Rob Torren told him icily, "are that I will help you to escape. You will then write a letter to Esther, saying that I did so and outlining the conditions of the duel as we agree upon them. I will, in turn, write a letter to the Space Guard brass, withdrawing my charges against you. We will fight. The survivor will destroy his own letter and make use of the other. Do you agree to that?"

"I'll agree to anything," said Stan Buckley fiercely, "that will get my hands about your throat!"

Rob Torren shrugged.

"I've turned off the guard photocells," he said calmly. "I've a key for your cell. I'm going to let you out. I can't afford to kill you except under the conditions I named, or I'll have no chance to win Esther. If you kill me under any other conditions, you'll simply be beamed as a murderer." He paused, and then added, "And I have to come and fight you because a letter from you admitting that I've behaved honorably is the only possible thing

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that would satisfy Esther. You give your word to wait until you've escaped and I come for you before you try to kill me?"

Stan Buckley hesitated a long, long time. Then he said in a thick voice, "I give my word."

Without hesitation, Rob Torren put a key in the cell door and turned it. He stood aside. Stan Buckley walked out, his hands clenched. Torren closed the door and relocked it. He turned his back and walked down the corridor. He opened the door at its end. Again he stood aside. Stan Buckley went through. Torren closed the door, took a bit of cloth from his pocket, wiped off the key, hung it up again on a tiny hook, with the same bit of cloth threw a switch, and put the cloth back in his pocket.

"The photocells are back on," he said in a dry voice. "They say you're still in your cell. When the guard contradicts them, you'll seem to have vanished into thin air."

"I'm doing this," said Stan hoarsely, "to get a chance to kill you. Of course I've no real chance to escape!"

That was obvious. The *Stallifer* was deep in the void of interstellar space. She traveled at twelve hundred times the speed of light. Escape from the ship was impossible. And concealment past discovery when the ship docked was preposterous.

"That remains to be seen," said Torren coldly. "Come this way."

TORREN went down a hallway. He slipped into a narrow doorway, unnoticeable unless one was looking for it. Stan followed. He found himself in that narrow, compartmented space between the ship's inner and outer skins. A door; another compartment; another door. Then a tiny air-lock—used for the egress of a single man to inspect or repair such exterior apparatus as the scanners for the ship's vision screens. There was a heap of assorted apparatus beside the air-lock door.

"I prepared for this," said Torren curtly. "There's a space suit. Put it on. Here's a meteor miner's space skid. There are supplies. I brought this stuff as luggage, in water-tight cases. I'll fill the cases with my bath water and get off the ship with the same weight of luggage I had when I came on. That's my cover-up."

"And I?" asked Stan harshly.

"You'll take this chrono. It's synchronized with the ship's navigating clock. At two-two even you push off from the outside of the ship. The drive field fluctuates. When it collapses, you'll be outside it. When it expands—"

Stan Buckley raised his eyebrows. This was clever! The Bowdoin-Hall field, which permits of faster-than-light travel, is like a pulsating bubble, expanding and contracting at rates ranging from hundreds of thousands of times per second to the forty-per-second of deep-space speed. When the field is expanding, and bars of an artificial allotrope of carbon are acted upon by electrostatic forces in a certain scientific fashion, a ship and all its contents accelerate at a rate so great that it simply has no meaning. As the field contracts, a ship decelerates again. That is the theory, at any rate. There is no proof in sensation or instrument readings that such is the case. But velocity is inversely proportional to the speed of the field's pulsations, and only in deep space does a ship dare slow the pulsations too greatly, for fear of complications.

However, a man in a space suit could detach himself from a space ship traveling by the Bowdoin-Hall field. He could float free at the instant of the field's collapse, and be left behind when it expanded again. But he would be left alone in illimitable emptiness.

"You'll straddle the space skid," said Torren shortly. "It's full powered—good for some millions of miles. At two-two exactly the *Stallifer* will be as close to Khor Alpha as it will go. Khor Alpha's a dwarf white star that's used as a course marker. It has one planet that the directories say has a breathable atmosphere, and list as a possible landing refuge, but which they also say is unexamined. You'll make for that planet and land. You'll wait for me. I'll come!"

Stan Buckley said in soft ferocity, "I hope so!"

Torren's rage flared.

"Do you think I'm not as anxious to kill you as you are to kill me?"

For an instant the two tensed, as if for a struggle to the death there between the two skins of the space ship. Then Torren turned away.

"Get in your suit," he said curtly. "I'll get a private flyer and come after you as soon as the hearing about your disappearance is over. Push off at two-two even. Make it exact!"

He went angrily away, and Stan Buckley stared after him, hating him, and then grimly turned to the apparatus that lay in an untidy heap beside the air-lock door.

Five minutes later he opened the outer

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door of the lock. He was clad in space armor and carried with him a small pack of supplies—the standard abandon-ship kit—and the little space-drive unit. The unit was one of those space skids used by meteor miners—merely a shaft which contained the drive and power unit, a seat, and a cross-shaft by which it was steered. It was absurdly like a hobby-horse for a man in a space suit, and it was totally unsuitable for interplanetary work because it consumed too much power when fighting gravity. For Stan, though, starting in mid-space and with only one landing to make, it should be adequate.

He locked the chrono where he could see it on the steering bar. He strapped the supply kit in place. He closed the air-lock door very softly. He waited, clinging to the outer skin of the ship with magnetic shoes.

The cosmos seemed very small and quite improbable. The specks of light which were suns seemed to crawl here and there. Because of their motion it was impossible to think of them as gigantic balls of unquenchable fire. They moved! To all appearances, the *Stallifer* flowed onward in a cosmos perhaps a dozen miles in diameter, in which many varicolored fireflies moved with a vast deliberation.

The hand of the chrono moved, and moved, and moved. At two-two exactly, Stan pressed the drive stud. At one instant he and his improbable space steed rested firmly against a thousand-foot hill of glistening chrom-steel. The waverings of the Bowdoin-Hall field were imperceptible. The cosmos was small and limited and the *Stallifer* was huge. Then the skid's drive came on. It shot away from the hull—and the ship vanished as utterly as a blown-out candle flame. And the universe was so vast as to produce a cringing sensation in the man who straddled an absurd small device in such emptiness, with one cold white sun—barely near enough to show a disk—and innumerable remote and indifferent stars on every hand.

On the instant when the ship's field contracted and left him outside, Stan had lost the incredible velocity the field imparts. In the infinitesimal fraction of a second required for the field to finish its contraction after leaving him, the ship had traveled literally thousands of miles. In the slightly greater fraction of a second required for it to expand again, it had moved on some millions of miles. By the time Stan's mind had actually grasped the fact that he was alone in space, the ship from which he had separated himself was probably fifty or sixty millions of miles away.

He was absolutely secure against recapture, of course. If his escape went unnoticed for even half a minute, it would take all the ships of all the Space Guard a thousand years to search the volume of space in which one small space-suited figure might be found. And it was unlikely that his escape would be noticed for hours.

He was very terribly alone. A dwarf white sun glowed palely, many, many millions of miles away. Stars gazed at him incuriously, separated by light-centuries of space.

He started the minute gyroscopes that enabled him to steer the skid. He started in toward the sun. He had a planet to find and land on. Of course, Rob Torren could simply have contrived his escape to emptiness so that he might die and shrivel in the void, and never, never, never through all eternity be found again. But somehow, Stan had a vast faith in the hatred which existed between the two of them.

IT WAS two days later when he approached the solitary planet of Khor Alpha. The air in his space suit had acquired that deadly staleness which is proof that good air is more than merely a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen. He felt the sluggish discomfort which comes of bottled, repurified breathing-mixture. And as the disk of the planet grew large, he saw little or nothing to make him feel more cheerful.

The planet rotated as he drew near, and it seemed to be absolutely featureless. The terminator—the shadow line as sunlight encroached on the planet's night side—was a perfect line. There were, then, no mountains. There were no clouds. There seemed to be no vegetation. There was, though, a tiny polar icecap—so small that at first he did not discover it. It was not even a dazzling white, but a mere whitishness where a polar cap should be, as if it were hoarfrost instead of ice.

He went slanting down to match the planet's ground speed in his approach. Astride the tiny space skid, he looked rather like an improbable witch astride an incredible broomstick. And he was very, very tired.

Coming up in a straight line, half the planet's disk was night. Half the day side

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was hidden by the planet's bulge. He actually saw no more than a quarter of the surface at this near approach, and that without magnification.

Any large features would have been spotted from far away, but he had given up hope of any variation from monotony when—just as he was about to enter the atmosphere — one dark patch in the planet's uniformly dazzling white surface appeared at the very edge of day. It was at the very border of the dawn belt. He could be sure only of its existence, and that it had sharp, specifically straight edges.

He saw rectangular extensions from the main mass of it. Then he hit atmosphere, and the thin stuff thrust at him violently because of his velocity, and he blinked and automatically turned his head aside, so that he did not see the dark patch again before his descent put it below the horizon.

Even so near, no features, no natural formations appeared. There was only a vast brightness below him. He could make no guess as to his height nor—after he had slowed until the wind against his body was not detectable through the space suit—of his speed with relation to the ground. It was extraordinary. It occurred to him to drop something to get some idea, even if a vague one, of his altitude above the ground.

He did—an oil-soaked rag from the tool kit. It went fluttering down and down, and abruptly vanished, relatively a short distance below him. It had not landed. It had been blotted out.

Tired as he was, it took him minutes to think of turning on the suit-microphone which would enable him to hear sounds in this extraordinary world. But when he flicked the switch he heard a dull, droning, moaning noise which was unmistakable. Wind. Below him there was a sandstorm. He was riding just above its upper surface. He could not see the actual ground because there was an opaque wall of sand between. There might be five hundred feet between him and solidity, or five thousand, or there might be no actual solid, immovable ground at all. In any case, he could not possibly land.

He rose again and headed for the dark area he had noted. But a space skid is not intended for use in atmosphere. Its power is great, to be sure, when its power unit is filled. But Stan had come a very long way indeed since his departure from the *Stallifer*. And his drive had blown a fuse, once, which cost him some power.

Unquestionably, the blown fuse had been caused by the impinging of a Bowdoin-Hall field upon the skid. Some other space ship than the *Stallifer*, using Khor Alpha as a course guide, had flashed past the one-planet system at many hundred times the speed of light. The pulsations of its drive field had struck the skid and drained its drive of power, and unquestionably had registered the surge. But it was not likely that it would be linked with Stan's disappearance. The other ship might be headed for a star system light-centuries from Earth, and a minute—relatively a minute—joggle of its meters would not be a cause for comment. The real seriousness of the affair was that the skid had drained power before its fuse blew.

That property of a Bowdoin-Hall field, incidentally—its trick of draining power from any drive unit in its range—is the reason that hampers its use save in deep space. Liners have to be elaborately equipped with fuses lest in shorting each other's drives they wreck their own. In interplanetary work, fuses are not even practical because they might be blown a hundred times in a single voyage. Within solar systems high-frequency pulsations are used, so that no short can last more than the hundred-thousandth of a second, in which time not even allotropic graphite can be ruined.

Stan, then, was desperately short of power and had to use it in a gravitational field which was prodigally wasteful of it. He had to rise high above the sandstorm before he saw the black area again at the planet's very rim. He headed for it in the straightest of straight lines. As he drove, the power-gauge needle flickered steadily over toward zero. A meteor miner does not often use as much as one earth-gravity acceleration, and Stan had to use that much merely to stay aloft. The black area, too, was all of a hundred-odd miles away, and after some millions of miles of space travel, the skid was hard put to make it.

He dived for the black thing as it drew near, and on his approach it appeared simply impossible. It was a maze, a grid, of rectangular girders upholding a seemingly infinite number of monstrous dead-black slabs. There was a single layer of those slabs, supported by innumerable spidery slender columns. Here, in the dawn belt, there was no wind and Stan could see clearly. Sloping down, he saw that ten-foot columns of some dark metal rose

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straight and uncompromising from a floor of sand to a height of three hundred feet or more. At their top were the grid and the slabs, forming a roof some thirty stories above the ground. There were no under-floors, no cross-ways, no structural features of any sort between the sand from which the columns rose and that queer and discontinuous roof.

Stan landed on the ground at the structure's edge. He could see streaks and bars of sky between the slabs. He looked down utterly empty aisles between the columns and saw nothing but the columns and the roof until the shafts merged in the distance. There was utter stillness here. The sand was untroubled and undisturbed. If the structure was a shelter, it sheltered nothing. Yet it stretched for at least a hundred miles in at least one direction, as he had seen from aloft. As nearly as he could tell, there was no reason for its existence and no purpose it could serve. Yet it was not the abandoned skeleton of something no longer used. It was plainly in perfect repair.

The streaks of sky to be seen between its sections were invariably exact in size and alignment. They were absolutely uniform. There was no delapidation and no defect anywhere. The whole structure was certainly artificial and certainly purposeful, and it implied enormous resources of civilization. But there was no sign of its makers, and Stan could not even guess at the reason for its construction.

But he was too worn out to guess. On board the *Stallifer,* he'd been so sick with rage that he could not rest. On the space skid, riding in an enormous loneliness about a dwarf sun whose single planet had never been examined by men, he had to be alert. He had to find the system's one planet, and then he had to make a landing with practically no instruments. When he landed at the base of the huge grid, he examined his surroundings wearily, but with the cautious suspicion needful on an unknown world. Then he made the sort of camp the situation seemed to call for. He clamped the space skid and his supplies to his space suit belt, lay down hard by one of the columns, and incontinently fell asleep.

HE WAS wakened by a horrific roaring in his earphones. He lay still for one instant. When he tried to stir, it was only with enormous difficulty that he could move his arms and legs. He felt as if he were gripped by quicksand. Then, suddenly, he was wide awake. He fought himself free of clinging incumbrances. He had been half buried in sand. He was in the center of a roaring, swirling sand-devil which broke upon the nearby column and built up mounds of sand and snatched them away again, and flung great masses of it crazily in every direction.

As the enigmatic structure had moved out of the dawn belt into the morning, howling winds had risen. All the fury of a tornado, all the stifling deadliness of a sandstorm, beat upon the base of the grid. And from what Stan had seen when he first tried to land, this was evidently the normal daily weather of this world. And if this was a sample of merely morning winds, by midday existence would be impossible.

Stan looked at the chrono. He had slept less than three hours. He made a loop of line from the abandon-ship kit and got it about the nearest pillar. He drew himself to that tall column. He tried to find a lee side, but there was none. The wind direction changed continually. He debated struggling farther under the shelter of the monstrous roof. He stared up, estimatingly—

He saw slabs tilt. In a giant section whose limits he could not determine, he saw the rectangular sections of the roof revolve in strict unison. From a position parallel to the ground, they turned until the light of the sky shone down unhindered. Vast masses of sand descended —deposited on the slabs by the wind, and now dumped down about the columns' bases. And then wind struck anew with a concentrated virulence, and the space between the columns became filled with a whirling giant eddy that blotted out everything.

It was a monster whirlwind that spun crazily in its place for minutes, and then roared out to the open again. In its violence it picked Stan up bodily, with the skid and abandon-ship kit still clamped to his space suit. But for the rope about the column he would have been ripped away and tossed insanely into the smother of sand that reached to the horizon.

After a long time, he managed to take up some of the slack of the rope; to bind himself and his possessions more closely to the column which rose into the smother overhead. Later still, he was able to take up more. In an hour, he was bound tightly to the pillar and was no longer flung to and fro by the wind. Then he dozed off again.

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It was uneasy slumber. It gave him little rest. Once a swirling sand-devil gouged away the sand beneath him so that he and his gear hung an unguessable distance above solidity, perhaps no more than a yard or so, but perhaps much more. Later he woke to find the sand piling up swiftly about him, so that he had to loosen his rope and climb wearily as tons of fine, abrasive stuff—it would have been strangling had he needed to breathe it direct—were flung upon him. But he did sleep from time to time.

Then night fell. The winds died down from hurricane intensity to no more than gale force. Then to mere frantic gusts. And then—the sun had set on the farther side of the huge structure to which he had tied himself—then there was a period when a fine whitish midst seemed to obscure all the stars, and it gradually faded, and he realized that it was particles of so fine a dust that it hung in the air long after the heavier stuff had settled.

He released himself from the rope about the pillar. He stood, a tiny figure, beside the gargantuan columns of black metal which rose toward the stars. The stars themselves shone down brightly, brittlely, through utterly clear air. There were no traces of cloud formation following the storm of the day.

It was obvious that this was actually the normal weather of this planet. By day, horrific winds and hurricanes. By night, a vast stillness. And the small size and indistinctness of the icecap he had seen was assurance that there was nowhere on the planet any sizeable body of water to moderate the weather. And with such storms, inhabitants were unthinkable. Life of any sort was out of the question. But if there was anything certain in the cosmos, it was that the structure at whose feet he stood was artificial!

He flicked on his suit-radio. Static only. Sand particles in dry air, clashing against each other, would develope charges to produce just the monstrous hissing sounds his earphones gave off. He flicked off the radio and opened his face-plate. Cold dry air filled his lungs.

There were no inhabitants. There could not be any. But there was this colossal artifact of unguessable purpose. There was no life on this planet, but early during today's storm—and he suspected at other times when he could neither see nor hear—huge areas of the roof-plates had turned together to dump down their accumulated loads of sand. As he breathed in the first breaths of cold air, he heard a shrill outcry and a roaring somewhere within the forest of pillars. At a guess, it was another dumping of sand from the roof. It stopped. Another roaring, somewhere else. Yet another. Section by section, area by area, the sand that had piled on the roof at the top of the iron columns was dumped down between the columns' bases.

Stan flicked on the tiny instrument lights and looked at the motor of the space skid. The needle was against the pin at zero. He considered, and shrugged. Rob Torren would come presently to fight him to the death. But it would take the *Stallifer* ten days or longer to reach Earth, then three or four days for the microscopic examination of every part of the vast ship in a grim search for him.

Then there'd be an inquiry. It might last a week or two weeks or longer. The findings would be given after deliberation which might produce still another delay of a week or even a month.

Rob Torren would not be free to leave Earth before then. And then it would take him days to get hold of a space yacht and —because a yacht would be slower than the *Stallifer*—two weeks or so to get back here. Three months in all, perhaps. Stan's food wouldn't last that long. His water supply wouldn't last nearly as long as that.

If he could get up to the icecap there would be water, and on the edge of the ice he could plant some of the painstakingly developed artificial plants whose seeds were part of every abandon-ship kit. They could live and produce food under almost any set of planetary conditions. But he couldn't reach the polar cap without power the skid didn't have.

He straddled the little device. He pointed it upward. He rose sluggishly. The absurd little vehicle wabbled crazily. Up, and up, and up toward the uncaring stars. The high thin columns of steel seemed to keep pace with him. The roof of this preposterous shed loomed slowly nearer, but the power of the skid was almost gone. He was ten feet below the crest when diminishing power no longer gave thrust enough to rise. He would hover here for seconds, and then drift back down again to the sand—for good.

He flung his kit of food upward. It sailed over the sharp edge of the roof and landed there. The skid was thrust down by the force of the throw, but it had less weight to lift. It bounced upward, soared above the roof, and just as its thrust

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dwindled again, Stan managed to land.

He found—nothing.

To be exact, he found the columns joined by massive girders of steel fastening them in a colossal open grid. Upon those girders which ran in a line due north and south—reckoning the place of sunset to be west—huge flat plates of metal were slung, having bearings which permitted them to be rotated at the will of whatever unthinkable constructor had devised them.

There were small bulges which might contain motors for the turning. There was absolutely nothing but the framework and the plates and the sand some three hundred feet below. There was no indication of the purpose of the plates or the girders or the whole construction. There was no sign of any person or creature using or operating the slabs. It appeared that the grid was simply a monotonous, featureless, insanely tedious construction which it would have taxed the resources of Earth to build. It stretched far, far beyond the horizon—and did nothing and had no purpose save to gather sand on its upper surface and from time to time dump that sand down to the ground. It did not make sense.

Stan had a more immediate problem than the purpose of the grid, though. He was three hundred feet above ground. He was short of food and hopelessly short of water. When day came again, this place would be the center of a hurricane of blown sand. On the ground, lashed to a metal column, he had been badly buffeted about even in his space suit. Up here the wind would be much stronger. It was not likely that any possible lashing would hold him against such a storm. He could probably get back to the ground, of course, but there seemed no particular point to it.

As he debated, there came a thin, shrill whistling overhead. It came from the far south, and passed overhead, descending, and—going down in pitch—it died away to the northward. The lowering of its pitch indicated that it was slowing. The sound was remarkably like that of a small space craft entering atmosphere incompletely under control—which was unthinkable, of course, on the solitary unnamed planet of Khor Alpha. And Stan felt very, very lonely on a huge plate of iron thirty stories above the ground, on an alien planet under unfriendly stars, and with this cryptic engineering monstrosity breaking away to sheer desert on one side and extending uncounted miles in all others.

He flicked on his suit-radio, without hope.

There came the loud, hissing static. Then under and through it came the humming carrier-wave of a yacht transmitter sending on emergency power.

"Help call! Help call! Space yacht *Erebus* grounded on planet of Khor Alpha, main drive burned out, landed in darkness, outside conditions unknown. If anyone hears, p-please answer! M-my landing drive smashed when I hit ground, too! Help call! Help call! Space yacht *Erebus* grounded on planet of Khor Alpha, main drive burned out, landed in darkness—"

Stan Buckley had no power. He could not move from this spot. The *Erebus* had grounded somewhere in the desert which covered all the planet but this one structure. When dawn came, the sandstorm would begin again. And with its main drive burned out, its landing drive smashed—when the morrow's storms began it would be strange indeed if the whirlwinds did not scoop away sand from about the one solid object they'd encounter, so that the little craft would topple down and down and ultimately be covered over, buried under maybe hundreds of feet of smothering stuff.

He knew the *Erebus*. Of course. It belonged to Esther Hume. The voice from it was Esther's—the girl he was to have married, if Rob Torren hadn't made charges disgracing him utterly. And tomorrow she would be buried alive in the helpless little yacht, while he was unable to lift a finger to her aid.

HE WAS talking to her desperately when there was a vast, labored tumult to the west. It was the product of ten thousand creakings. He turned, and in the starlight he saw great flat plates—they were fifty feet by a hundred and more—turning slowly. An area a mile square changed its appearance. Each of the flat plates in a hundred rows of fifty plates turned sidewise, to dump its load of settled sand. A square mile of plates turned edges to the sky—and turned back again. Creakings and groanings filled the air, together with the soft roaring noise of the falling sand. A pause. Another great section of a mile each way performed the same senseless motion. Pure desperation made Stan say sharply:

"Esther! Cut off for half an hour! I'll call back! I see the slimmest possible chance, and I've got to take it! Half an hour, understand?"

He heard her unsteady assent. He

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scrambled fiercely to the nearest of the huge plates. It was, of course, insane to think of such a thing. The plates had no purpose save to gather loads of sand and then to turn and dump them. But there were swellings at one end of each—where the girders to which they clung united to form this preposterous elevated grid. Those swellings might be motors. He dragged a small cutting-torch from the tool kit. He snapped its end. A tiny, savage, blue-white flame appeared in midair half an inch from the torch's metal tip.

He turned that flame upon the rounded swelling at the end of a monster slab. Something made the slabs turn. By reason, it should be a motor. The swellings might be housings for motors. He made a cut across such a swelling. At the first touch of the flame something smoked luridly and frizzled before the metal grew white-hot and flowed aside before the flame. There had been a coating on the iron.

Even as he cut, Stan realized that the columns and the plates were merely iron. But the sand blast of the daily storms should erode the thickest of iron away in a matter of weeks, at most. So the grid was coated with a tough, elastic stuff—a plastic of some sort — which was not abraded by the wind. It did not scratch because it was not hard. It yielded, and bounced sand particles away instead of resisting them. It would outwear iron, in the daily sand blast, by a million times, on the principle by which land vehicles on Earth use rubber tires instead of metal, for greater wear.

He cut away a flap of metal from the swelling. He tossed it away with his space-gloved hands. His suit-flash illuminated the hollow within. There was a motor inside, and it was remarkably familiar, though not a motor such as men made for the purpose of turning things. There was a shaft. There were four slabs of something that looked like graphite, rounded to fit the shaft. That was all. No coils. No armature. No sign of magnets.

Men used this same principle, but for a vastly different purpose. Men used the reactive thrust of allotropic graphite against an electric current in their space ships. The Bowdoin-Hall field made such a thrust incredibly efficient, and it was such graphite slabs that drove the *Stallifer*—though these were monsters weighing a quarter of a ton apiece, impossible for the skid to lift. Insulated cables led to the slabs in wholly familiar fashion. The four cables joined to two and vanished in the seemingly solid girders which formed all the giant grid.

Almost without hope, Stan slashed through two cables with his torch. He dragged out the recharging cable of the skid. He clipped the two ends to the two cut cables. They sparked! Then he stared. The meter of the skid showed current flowing into its power bank. An amazing amount of current. In minutes, the power-storage needle stirred from its pin. In a quarter of an hour it showed half-charge. Then a creaking began all around.

Stan leaped back to one of the cross-girders just as all the plates in an area a mile square about him began to turn—all but the one whose motor-housing he had cut through. All the others plates turned so that their edges pointed to the stars. The sand piled on them by the day storm poured down into the abyss beneath. Only the plate whose motor-housing Stan had cut remained unmoving. Sparks suddenly spat in the metal hollow, as if greater voltage had been applied to stir the unmoving slab. A flaring, lurid, blue-white arc burned inside the housing. Then it cut off.

All the gigantic plates which had turned their edges skyward went creaking loudly back to their normal position, their flat sides turned to the stars. And nothing more happened. Nothing at all.

In another ten minutes, the skid's meter showed that the power bank was fully charged. And Stan, with plenty to think about, straddled the little object and went soaring to northward like a witch on a broom, sending a call on his suit-radio before him.

"Coming, Esther! Give me a directional and let's make it fast! We've got a lot to do before daylight!"

He had traveled probably fifty miles before her signal came in. Then there was a frantically anxious time until he found the little, helpless space yacht, tumbled on the desert sand, with Esther peering hopefully out of the air-lock as he swooped down to a clumsy landing. She was warned and ready. There was no hope of repairing the drive. A burned-out drive to operate in a Bowdoin-Hall field calls for bars of allotropic graphite—graphite in a peculiar energy state as different from ordinary graphite as carbon diamond is from carbon coal. There were probably monster bars of just such stuff in the giant grid's motors, but the skid could not handle them. For tonight, certainly, repair was

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out of the question. Esther had hooked up a tiny, low-power signaling device which gave out a chirping wave every five seconds. She wore a space suit, had two abandon-ship kits, and all the water that could be carried.

The skid took off again. It was not designed to work in a planet's gravitational field. It used too much power, and it wabbled erratically, and for sheer safety Stan climbed high. With closed faceplates the space-suited figures seemed to soar amid the stars. They could speak only by radio, close together as they were.

"Wh-where are we going, Stan?"

"Icecap," said Stan briefly. "North Pole. There's water there—or hoarfrost, anyhow. And the day storms won't be so bad if there are storms at all. In the tropics on this planet the normal weather is a typhoon-driven sandstorm. We'll settle down in the polar area and wait for Rob Torren to come for us. It may be three months or more."

"Rob Torren—"

"He helped me escape," said Stan briefly. "Tell you later. Watch ahead."

He'd had no time for emotional thinking since his landing, and particularly since the landing of the little space yacht now sealed up and abandoned to be buried under the desert sand. But he knew how Esther came to be here. She'd told him, by radio, first off. She'd had news of the charges Rob Torren had brought against him. She hadn't believed them. Not knowing of his embarcation for Earth for court-martial—the logical thing would have been a trial at advanced base—she'd set out desperately to assure him of her faith.

She couldn't get a liner direct, so she'd set out alone in her little space yacht. In a sense, it should have been safe enough. Craft equipped with Bowdoin-Hall drive were all quite capable of interstellar flight. Power was certainly no problem any more, and with extra capacitors to permit of low-frequency pulsations of the drive field, and mapped dwarf white stars as course markers, navigation should be simple enough. The journey, as such, was possibly rash but it was not foolhardy. Only—she hadn't fused her drive when she changed its pulsation-frequency. And when she was driving past Khor Alpha, her Bowdoin-Hall field had struck the space skid on which Stan was trying to make this planet, and the field had drained his power.

The short circuit blew the skid's fuse, but it burned out the yacht's more delicate drive. Specifically, it overloaded and ruined the allotropic carbon blocks which made the drive work. So Esther's predicament was caused not only by her solicitude for Stan, but by the drive of the skid on which he'd escaped from the *Stallifer*.

HE BLAMED himself. Bitterly. But even more he blamed Rob Torren. Hatred surged up in him again for the man who had promised to come here and fight him to the death. But he said quietly:

"Rob's coming here after me. We'll talk about that later. He didn't guess this place would be without water and with daily hurricanes everywhere except—I hope!—the poles. He thought I'd be able to make out until he could come back. We've got to! Watch out ahead for the sunset line. We've got to follow it north until we hit the polar cap. With water and our kits we should be able to survive indefinitely."

The space-suited figures were close together—in fact, in contact. But there was no feeling of touching each other through the insulating, almost inflexible armor of their suits. And sealed as they were in their helmets and communicating only by phone in the high stratosphere, neither could feel the situation suitable for romance. Esther was silent for a time. Then she said:

"You told me you were out of power—"

"I was," he told her. "I got some from the local inhabitants—if they're local."

"What—"

He described the preposterous, meaningless structure on the desert. Thousands of square miles in extent. Cryptic and senseless and of unimaginable significance.

"Every slab has a motor to turn it. I cut into a housing and there was power there. I loaded up with it. I can't figure the thing out. There's nowhere that a civilized or any other race could live. There's nothing those slabs could be for!"

There was a thin line of sunlight far ahead. Traveling north, they drove through the night and overtook the day. They were very high indeed, now, beyond atmosphere and riding the absurd small skid that meteor miners use. They saw the dwarf white sun, Khor Alpha. Its rays were very fierce. They passed over the dividing line between day and night, and far, far ahead they saw the hazy whitishness which was the polar cap of this planet.

It was half an hour before they landed, and when they touched ground they came simply to a place where wind-blown sand

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ceased to be powdery and loose, and where there was plainly dampness underneath. The sun hung low indeed on the horizon. On the shadow side of sand hillocks there was hoarfrost. All the moisture of the planet was deposited in the sand at its poles, and during the long winter nights the sand was frozen so that even during the summer season unthinkable frigidity crept out into every shadow.

Stan nodded at a patch of frost on the darker site of a half-mile sand dune.

"Sleeping," he said dryly, "will be done in space suits. This ground will be cold where the sun doesn't hit! Do you notice that there's no sign of anything growing anywhere? Not even moss?"

"It's too cold?"

"Hardly!" said Stan. "Mosses and lichens grow on Earth as far north as the ground ever thaws. And on every other planet I've ever visited. There'd be plants here if anywhere, because there's water here. There simply can't be any life on this planet. None at all!"

Then the absurdity of the statement struck him. There was that monstrous grid, made by intelligence of some sort and using vast resources. But—

"Dammit!" said Stan. "How can there be life here? How can plants live in perpetual sandstorms? How can animals live without plants to break down minerals and make them into food? How can either plants or animals live without water? If there were life anywhere, it would have to be near water, which means here. And if there's none here there can't be any at all—"

They reached the top of the dune. Esther caught her breath. She pointed.

There, reaching across the dampened sand, was a monstrous and a horrifying trail. Something had come from the zones where the sandstorms raged. It had passed this way, moving in one direction, and it had passed again, going back toward the stormy wastes. By the trail, it had ten or twelve or twenty legs, like some unthinkable centipede. The tracks of its separate sets of legs were separated by fifteen feet. And each footprint was two yards across.

FOR three days by the chrono on the space skid, the hard white sun Khor Alpha circled the horizon without once setting. Which was natural, because this was one of the poles of Khor Alpha's only planet, and this was summer. In those three days Stan and Esther saw no living thing. No bird, beast, or insect; no plant, moss, or lichen. They had planted the seeds from their abandon-ship kits—included in such kits because space castaways may have to expect to be isolated not for weeks or months, but perhaps for all their lives.

The weeds would produce artificially developed plants with amazing powers of survival and adaptation and food production. On the fourth day—clock time—the first of the plants appeared above the bank of damp sand in which they had been placed. In seven days more there would be food from them. If one plant of the lot was allowed to drop its own seeds, in time there would be a small jungle of food plants on which they could live.

For the rest, they lived in a fashion lower than any savages of Earth. They had no shelter. There was no building material but sand. They slept in their space suits for warmth. They had no occupation save that of waiting for the plants to bear food, and after that of waiting for Rob Torren to come.

And when he came—the presence of Esther changed everything. When Torren arrived to fight a duel to the death with Stan, the stake was to have been ultimately Esther's hand. But if she were present, if she knew the true story of Torren's charges against Stan and their falsity, he could have no hope of winning her by Stan's death. He would have nothing to gain by a duel. But he would gain by the murder of one or both of them. Safety from the remotest chance of later exposure, at any rate, and revenge for the failure of his hopes. And if he managed to kill Stan by any means, fair or foul, Esther would be left wholly at his mercy.

So Stan brooded, hating Rob Torren with a desperate intensity surpassing even the hatred he'd felt on the *Stallifer*. A large part of his hatred was due to helplessness. There was no way to fight back. But he tried desperately to think of one.

On the fourth day he said abruptly, "Let's take a trip, Esther."

She looked at him in mute inquiry.

"For power," he said "and maybe something more. We might be able to find out something. If there are inhabitants on this planet, for instance. There can't be, but there's that beast—

"Maybe it's somehow connected with whatever or whoever built that grid—that checkerboard arrangement I told you about. Something or somebody built that, but I can't believe anything can live in those sandstorms."

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They'd followed the huge trail that had been visible on their first landing in the polar regions. The great, two-yard-across pads of the monster had made a clear trail for ten miles from the point of their discovery. At the end of the trail there was a great gap in a cliff of frozen sand. The Thing seemed to have devoured tons of ice-impacted stuff. Then it had gone back into the swirling sandy wastes. It carried away with it cubic yards—perhaps twenty or thirty tons—of water-filled frozen sand.

But reason insisted that there could be no animal life on a planet without plants, and no plants on a desert which was the scene of daily typhoons, hourly hurricanes, and with no water anywhere upon it save at the poles. And there was no vegetation there. A monster with dozens of six-foot feet, and able to consume tons of wetted sand for moisture, would need vast quantities of food for energy alone. And it was unthinkable that food was to be found in the strangling depths of perpetual sandstorms.

"There's another thing," Stan added. "With power to spare I could fuse sand into something like a solid. Make a house, maybe, and chairs to sit on, instead of having to wear our space suits all the time. Maybe we could even heat the inside of a house!"

Esther smiled at him.

"Darling," she said wryly, "you've no idea how glad I'd be of a solid floor to walk on instead of sand, and a chair to sit on, even if we didn't have a roof!"

They had been, in effect, in the position of earth-castaways marooned on a sand-cay which had not even seashells on it or fish around it. There was literally nothing they could do but talk.

"And," she added, "if we could make a tub to take a bath in—"

She brightened at the thought. Stan hadn't told her of his own reasons for having no hope. There was no point in causing her despair in advance.

"We'll see what we see," he said. "Climb aboard."

The space skid was barely five feet long. It had a steering bar and a thick body which contained its power-storage unit and drive. And there was the seat which one straddled, and the strap to hold its passenger. Two people riding it in bulky space suits was much like riding double on a bicycle, but Stan would not leave Esther alone. Not since they'd seen that horrifying trail!

They rose vertically and headed south in what was almost a rocket's trajectory. Stan, quite automatically, had noted the time of sunrise at the incredible structure beside which he'd landed. Later, he'd noted as automatically the length of the planet's day. So to find his original landing place he had only to follow the dawn line across the planet's surface, with due regard for the time consumed in traveling.

They were still two hundred miles out in space when he sighted the grid. He slanted down to it. It was just emerging from the deep black shadow of night. He swooped to a landing on one of the hundred-foot slabs of hinged metal three hundred feet above ground. It was clear of sand. It had obviously been dumped.

Esther stared about her, amazed.

"But—people made this, Stan!" she insisted. "If we can get in touch with them—"

"You sit over there," said Stan. He pointed to an intersection of the criss-crossing girders. "It takes power to travel near a planet. My power bank is half drained already. I'd better fill it up again."

He got out his cutting-torch. He turned it upon a motor-housing. The plastic coating frizzled and smoked. It peeled away. Metal flared white-hot and melted.

There was a monstrous creaking. All the plates in a square mile turned. Swiftly. Only a desperate leap saved Stan from a drop to the desert thirty stories below.

The great slabs pointed their edges to the sky. Stan waited. Esther said startledly;

"That was on purpose, Stan!"

"Hardly," said Stan. "They'll turn back in a minute."

But they did not turn back. They stayed tilted toward the dawning sky.

"You may be right, at that," said Stan. "We'll see. Try another place."

Five minutes later they landed on a second huge slab of black metal, miles away. Without a word, Stan ensconced Esther on the small platform formed by crossing girders. He took out the torch again. The tiny, blue-white flame. Smoke at its first touch. Metal flowed.

With a vast cacchination of squeakings, a mile-square section shifted like the first. . . .

"Something," said Stan grimly, "doesn't want us to have power. Maybe they can stop us, and maybe not."

The swelling which was the motor-housing was just within reach from the immovable girder crossing on which Esther

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waited. Stan reached out now. The torch burned with a quiet fierce flame. A great section of metal fell away, exposing a motor exactly like the one he'd first examined—slabs of allotropic graphite and all. He thrust in and cut the cables. He reached in with the charging clips—

There was a crackling report in the space skid's body. Smoke came out.

STAN examined the damage with grimly set features.

"Blew another fuse," he told Esther. "We're licked. When I took power the first time, I ruined a motor. It's been found out. So the plates turned, today, to—scare me away, perhaps, as soon as I cut into another. When I didn't scare and severed the cables, high-voltage current was shot into them to kill me or ruin whatever I was using the power for. Whether there's life here or not, there's intelligence—and a very unpleasant kind, too!"

He re-fused the skid, scowling.

"No attempt to communicate with us!" he said savagely. "They'd know somebody civilized cut into that motor-housing! They'd know it was an emergency! You'd think—"

He stopped. A faint, faint humming sound became audible. It seemed to come from nowhere in particular—or from everywhere. But it was not the formless humming of a rising wind. This sound was a humming punctuated by hurried, rhythmic clankings. It was oddly like the sound of cars traveling over an old-fashioned railway—one with unwelded rail joints. Then Esther jerked her head about.

"Stan! Look there!"

Something hurtled toward them in the gray dawn light. It was a machine. Even in the first instant of amazement, Stan could see what it was and what it was designed to do. It was a huge, bulbous platform above stiltlike legs. At the bottoms of the legs were wheels. The wheels ran on the cross-girders as on a railroad track, and the body of the thing was upraised enough to ride well above the sidewise-tilted slabs. There were other wheels to be lowered for travel on the girders which supported the slabs.

It was not a flying device, but a rolling one. It could travel in either of two directions at right angles to each other, and had been designed to run only on the great grid which ran beyond the horizon. It was undoubtedly a maintaining machine, designed to reach any spot where trouble developed, for the making of repairs, and it was of such weight that even the typhoonlike winds of a normal day on this world could not lift it from its place.

It came hurtling toward them at terrific speed. It would roll irresistibly over anything on the girders which were its tracks.

"Get on!" snapped Stan. "Quick!"

Esther moved as swiftly as she could, but space suits are clumsy things. The little skid shot skyward only part of a second before the colossus ran furiously over the place where they had been. A hundred feet beyond, it braked and came to a seemingly enraged stop. It stood still as if watching the hovering, tiny skid with its two passengers.

"It looks disappointed," said Stan dourly. "I wonder if it wants to chase us?"

He sent the skid darting away. They landed. In seconds the vibration caused by the huge machine's motion began and grew loud. They saw it race into view. As it appeared, instantly a deafening clamor began. Slabs in all directions rose to their vertical position, so that the two humans could not dodge from one row of girders to another. And then with a roar and a rush the thing plunged toward them once more.

Again the skid took off. Again the huge machine overran the spot where they had been, then stopped short as if baffled. Stan sent his odd craft off at an angle. Instantly the gigantic thing was in motion, moving in lightning speed in one direction, stopping short to move on a new course at right angles to the first, and so progressing in zigzag but very swift pursuit.

"'Won't you land so I can crush you?' said the monster to us two," said Stan dryly. "They won't let us have any more power, and we haven't any more to waste. But still—"

He listened to his suit-radio, twisting the tuning dials as he sent the skid up in a spiral.

"I'm wondering," he observed, "if they're trying to tell us something by radio. And meanwhile I'd like a more comprehensive view of this damned checkerboard!"

A faint, faint, wavering whine came into the headphones.

"There's something," he commented "Not a main communication wave, though. A stray harmonic—and of a power beam, I think. They must use plenty short waves!"

But he was searching the deadly monotony of the grid below him as he spoke. Suddenly, he pointed. All the area below

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them to the horizon was filled with geometric shapes of grids and squares. But one space was different from the rest. Four squares were thrown into one, there. And as the skid dived for a nearer view, that one square was seen to be a deep, hollow shaft going down toward the very vitals of this world. As Stan looked, though, it filled swiftly with something rising from its depths. The lifting thing was a platform, and things moved about on it.

"That's that!" said Stan hardly.

He shot the skid away in level flight at topmost speed, with the great rolling machine following helplessly and ragingly on its zigzag course below.

The horizon was dark, now, with the coming night. As Stan lifted for the rocketlike trajectory that would take him back to the polar regions, the white sun sank fiercely. There was a narrow space on which the rays smote so slantingly that the least inequality of level was marked by shadow. Gigantic sand dunes were outlined there. But beyond, where the winds began, there was only featureless swirling dust.

Stan was very silent all the way back. Only, once, he said calmly, "Our power units will soak up a pretty big charge in a short time. We packed away some power before the fuse blew."

There was no comment for Esther to make. There was life on the planet. It was life which knew of their existence and presence—and had tried to kill them for the theft of some few megawatts of power. It would not be easy to make terms with the life which held other life so cheaply.

With the planet's only source of power now guarded, matters looked less bright than before. But after they had reached the icecap, and when they slanted down out of the airlessness to the spot which was their home because their seeds had been planted there—as they dived down for a landing, their real situation appeared.

There was a colossal object with many pairs of legs moving back and forth over the little space where their food plants sprouted. In days, those plants would have yielded food. They wouldn't yield food now.

Their garden was being trampled to nothingness by a multilegged machine of a size comparable to the other machine which had chased them on the grid. It was fifty feet high from ground to top, and had a round, tanklike body all of twenty feet in diameter. Round projections at one end looked like eyes. It moved on multiple legs which trampled in orderly confusion. It stamped the growing plants to pulped green stuff in the polar sand. It went over and over and over the place where the food necessary for the humans' survival had promised to grow. It stamped and stamped: It destroyed all hope of food. And it destroyed all hope.

Because, as Stan drove the skid down to see the machine more clearly, it stopped in its stamping. It swung about to face him, with a curiously unmachinelike ferocity. As Stan veered, it turned also. When he sped on over it and beyond, it wheeled and came galloping with surprising speed after him.

Then they saw another machine. Two more. Three. They saw dark specks here and there in the polar wastes, every one a machine like the one which had tramped their food supply out of existence. And every one changed course to parallel and approach the skid's line of travel. If they landed, the machines would close in.

There was only so much power. The skid could not stay indefinitely aloft. And anywhere that they landed—

BUT they did land. They had to. It was a thousand miles away, on the dark side of the planet, in a waste of sand which looked frozen in the starlight. The instant the skid touched ground, Stan made a warning gesture and reached over to turn off Esther's suit-radio. He opened his own face-plate and almost gasped at the chill of the midnight air. With no clouds or water vapor to hinder it, the heat stored up by day was radiated out to the awful chill of interstellar space at a rate which brought below zero temperatures within hours of sundown. At the winter pole of the planet, the air itself must come close to turning liquid from the cold. But here, and now, Stan nodded in his helmet as Esther opened her face-plate.

"No radio," he told her. "They'll hardly be able to find us in several million square miles if we don't use radio. But now you get some sleep. We're going to have a busy time, presently!"

Esther hesitated, and said desperately, "But—who are they? What are they? Why do they want to kill us?"

"They're the local citizens," said Stan. "I was wrong, there are inhabitants. I've no more idea what they may be like than

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you have. But I suspect they want to kill us simply because we're strangers."

"But how could an intelligent race develop on a planet like this?" demanded Esther unbelievingly. "How'd they stay alive while they were developing?"

Stan shrugged his shoulders.

"Once you admit that a thing is so," he said dryly, "you can figure out how it happened. This sun is a dwarf white star. That means that once upon a time it exploded. It flared out into a nova. Maybe there were other planets nearer to it than this, and they volatilized when their sun blew up. Everything on this planet, certainly, was killed, and for a long, long time after it was surely uninhabitable by any standard. There's a dwarf star in the Crab Nebula which will melt iron four light-hours away—land that was a nova twelve hundred years ago. It must have been bad on this planet for a long time indeed.

"I'm guessing that when the first explosion came the inner planets turned to gas and this one had all its seas and forests and all its atmosphere simply blasted away to nothingness. Everything living on its surface was killed. Even bacteria in the soil turned to steam and went off into space. That would account for the absolute absence of life here now."

"But—" said Esther.

"But," said Stan, "the people—call them people—who lived here were civilized even then. They knew what was coming. If they hadn't interstellar drive, flight would do them no good. They'd have nowhere to go. So maybe they stayed. Underground. Maybe they dug themselves caves and galleries five—ten—twenty miles down. Maybe some of those galleries collapsed when the blow-up came, but some of the people survived. They'd stayed underground for centuries. They'd have to! It might be fifty thousand years they stayed underground, while Khor Alpha blazed less and less fiercely, and they waited until they could come up again.

"There was no air for a while up here. They had to fight to keep alive, down in the planet's vitals. They made a new civilization, surrounded by rock, with no more thought of stars. They'd be hard put to it for power, too. They couldn't well use combustion, with a limited air supply. They probably learned to transform heat to power direct. You can take power—electricity—and make heat. Why not the other way about? For maybe fifty thousand years, and maybe more, they had to live without even thinking of the surface of their world. But as the dwarf star cooled off, they needed its heat again."

He stopped. He seemed to listen intently. But there was no sound in the icy night. There were only bright, unwinking stars and an infinity of sand—and cold.

"So they dug up to the surface again," he went on. "Air had come back, molecule by molecule from empty space, drawn by the same gravitation that once had kept it from flying away. And the fused-solid rock of the surface, baked by day and frozen by night, had cracked and broken down to powder. When air came again and winds blew, it was sand. The whole planet was desert. The people couldn't live on the surface again. They probably didn't want to. But they needed power. So they built that monster grid they're so jealous of."

"You mean," Esther demanded incredulously, "that's a generator?"

"A transformer," corrected Stan. "Solar heat to electricity. Back on earth the sun pours better than a kilowatt of energy on every square yard of Earth's surface in the tropics—over three million kilowatts to the square mile. This checkerboard arrangement is at least a hundred and fifty by two hundred miles. The power's greater here, but, on earth, that would mean ninety thousand million kilowatts. More than a hundred thousand million horsepower—more than the whole Earth uses even now!

"If those big slabs convert solar radiation into power—and I charged up the skid from one of them—there's a reason for the checkerboard, and there's a reason for dumping the sand—it would hinder gathering power—and there's a reason for getting upset when somebody started to meddle with it. And they're upset! They'll have the conservation of moisture down to a fine point, down below, but they made those leggy machines to haul more water from the poles. When they set them all to hunting us, they're very much disturbed! But luckily they'd never have worked out anything to fly with underground and they're not likely to have done so since—considering the storms and all."

There was a short silence. Then Esther said slowly, "It's—very plausible, Stan. I believe it. And they'd have no idea of space travel, so they'd have no idea of other intelligent races, and actually they'd never think of castaways. They wouldn't understand, and they'd try to kill us to study the problem we presented. That's

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their idea, no doubt. And they've all the resources of a civilization that's old and scientific. They'll apply them all to get us —and they won't even think of listening to us! Stan! What can we do?"

Stan said amusedly, there in the still, frigid night of an unnamed planet, "Why—we'll do plenty! We're barbarians by comparison with them, Esther, and barbarians have equipment civilized men forget. All savages have spears, but a civilized man doesn't even always carry a pocketknife. If we can find the *Erebus,* we can probably defy this whole planet—until they put their minds to developing weapons. But right now you go to sleep. I'll watch."

Esther looked at him dubiously. Five days of sandstorms should have buried the little yacht irrecoverably.

"If it's findable," she said. Then she added wistfully, "But it would be nice to be on the *Erebus* again. It would feel so good to walk around without a space suit! And—" she added firmly, "after all, Stan, we are engaged! And if you think I like trying to figure out some way of getting kissed through an opened face-plate—"

Stan said gruffly, "Go to sleep!"

HE PACED up and down and up and down. They were remarkably unlike castaways in the space tale magazines. In those works of fiction, the hero is always remarkably ingenious. He contrives shelters from native growths on however alien a planet he and the heroine may have been marooned; he is full of useful odd bits of information which enable him to surprise her with unexpected luxuries, and he is inspired when it comes to signaling devices. But in five days on this planet, Stan had been able to make no use of any natural growth because there weren't any. He'd found no small luxuries for Esther because there was literally nothing about but sand. And there was strikingly little use in a fund of odd bits of information when there was only desert to apply it to—desert and sandstorms.

What he'd just told Esther was a guess; the best guess he could make, and a plausible one, but still a guess. The only new bit of information he'd picked up so far was the way the local inhabitants made electric motors. And he had to bet his and Esther's life on that!

He watched the chrono. And a good half hour before night would strike the checkerboard grid, he was verifying what few preparations he could make. A little later he waked Esther. And just about twenty minutes before the sunset line would reach the grid, they soared upward to seek it. If Stan's plan didn't work, they'd die. He was going to gamble their lives and the last morsel of power the skid's power unit contained, on information gained in two peeps at slab-motors on the grid, and the inference that all motors on this planet would be made on the same principle. Of course, as a subsidiary gamble, he had also to bet that he in an unarmed and wrecked space yacht could defy a civilization that had lived since before Khor Alpha was a dwarf star.

They soared out of atmosphere on a trajectory that saved power but was weirdly unlike any normal way of traveling from one spot on a planet's surface to another. Beneath them lay the vast expanse of the desert, all dense, velvety black except for one blindingly bright area at its western rim. That bright area widened as they neared it, overtaking the day. Suddenly the rectangular edges of the grid shed appeared, breaking the sharp edge of dusk.

The *Erebus* had grounded about fifty miles northward from the planet's solitary structure. Stan turned on his suit-radio and listened intently. There was no possible landmark. The dunes changed hourly during the day and on no two days were ever the same. He skimmed the settling sand clouds of the dusk belt. Presently he was sure he had overshot his mark.

He circled. He circled again. He made a great logarithmic spiral out from the point he considered most likely. The power meter showed the drain. He searched in the night, with no possible landmark. Sweat came out on his face.

Then he heard a tiny click. Sweat ran down his face. He worked desperately to localize the signal Esther had set to working in the yacht before she left it. When at last he landed and was sure the *Erebus* was under the starlit sand about him, he looked at the power gauge and tensed his lips. He pressed his space helmet close to Esther's, until it touched. He spoke, and his voice carried by metallic conduction without the use of radio.

"We might make it if we try now. But we're going to need a lot of power at best. I'm going to gamble the local yokels can't trace a skid drive and wait for morning, to harness the whirlwinds to do our digging for us."

Her voice came faintly back to him by the same means of communication.

"All right, Stan."

She couldn't guess his intentions, of

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course. They were probably insane. He said urgently:

"Listen! The yacht's buried directly under us. Maybe ten feet, maybe fifty, maybe Heaven knows how deep! There's a bare chance that if we get to it we can do something, with what I know now about the machines in use here. It's the only chance I know, and it's not a good one. It's only fair to tell you—"

"I'll try anything," said her voice in his helmet, "with you."

He swallowed. Then he stayed awake and desperately alert, his suit-microphones at their highest pitch of sensitivity, during the long and deadly monotonous hours of the night.

There was no alarm. When the sky grayed to the eastward, he showed her how he hoped to reach the yacht. The drive of the skid, of course, was not a pulsatory field such as even the smallest of space yachts used. It was more nearly an adaptation of a meteor-repeller beam, a simple reactive thrust against an artificial-mass field. It was the first type of drive ever to lift a ship from earth. For take-off and landing and purposes like meteor mining it is still better than the pulsating-field drive by which a ship travels in huge if unfelt leaps. But in atmosphere it does produce a tremendous black-blast of repelled air. It is never used on atmosphere-flyers for that very reason, but Stan proposed to make capital of its drawback for his purpose.

When he'd finished his explanation, Esther was more than a little pale, but she smiled gamely.

"All right, Stan. Go ahead!"

"We'll save power if we wait for the winds," he told her.

Already, though, breezes stirred across the dawn-lit sand. Already they were hot breezes. Already the fine, impalpable sand dust which settled last at nightfall was rising in curious opaque clouds which billowed and curled and blotted out the horizon. But the grid was hidden by the bulge of the planet's surface.

Stan pointed the little skid downward in a hollow he scooped out with his space-gloved hands. He set the gyros running to keep it pointed toward the buried yacht. He had Esther climb up behind him. He lashed the two of them together, and strapped them to the skid. And he waited.

In ten minutes after the first sand grains pelted on his armor, the sky was hidden by the finer dust. In twenty there were great gusts which could be felt even within the space suits. In half an hour a monster gale blew.

Stan turned on the space skid's drive. It thrust downward toward the sand and the buried yacht. It thrust upward against the air and pelting sand.

In three-quarters of an hour the sandstorm had reached frenzied violence—but the skid pushed down from within a little hollow. Its drive thrust up a spout of air. That spout drew sand grains with it. But it was needful to increase the power. After an hour a gigantic whirlwind swept around them. It tore at the two people and the tiny machine. It sucked up such a mass of powdery sand particles that their impact on the space suits was like a savage blow.

Emptiness opened beneath the skid as sand went whirling up in a sandspout the exact equivalent of a waterspout at sea. Stan and Esther and the skid itself would have been torn away by its violence but that the skid's drive was on full, now. The absurd little traveler thrust sturdily downward. When sand was drawn away by wind, it burrowed down eagerly to make the most of its gain.

Its back-thrust kept a steady, cone-shaped pressure on the sand which would have poured in upon it. Stan and Esther were buried and uncovered and buried again, but the skid fought valorously. It strove to dig deeper and to fling away the sand that would have hidden it from view. It remained, actually, at the bottom of a perpetually filling pit which it kept from filling by a geyser of upflung sand from its drive.

IN TWENTY minutes another whirlwind touched the pit briefly. The skid—helped by the storm—dug deeper yet. There came other swirling maelstroms. . . .

The nose of the skid touched solidity. It had burrowed down nearly fifty feet, with the aid of whirlwinds, and come to the yacht *Erebus*.

But it was another hour before accident and fierce efforts on Stan's part combined to let him reach the air-lock door, and maneuver the skid to keep that doorway clear, and for Esther to climb in—followed by masses of slithering sand—and Stan after her.

Inside the buried yacht, Stan fumbled for lights. He made haste to turn off the signaling device that had led him back to it deep under the desert's surface. And it was strangely and wonderfully still here, buried under thousands of tons of sand.

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Esther slipped out of her space suit and smiled tremulously at Stan.

"Now?"

"Now," said Stan, "if you want to, you can start cooking. We could do with a civilized meal. And I'll see what I can do toward a slightly less uncertain way of life."

He went forward. The *Erebus* was a small yacht, to be sure. It was a bare sixty feet over-all, and of course as a pleasure craft it had no actual armament. But within two bulging blisters at the bow the meteor-repellers were mounted. In flight, in space, they could make a two-way thrust against stray bits of celestial matter, so that if a meteor was tiny it was thrust aside, or if too large the *Erebus* swerved away.

From within, Stan changed the focus of the beams. They had been set to send out tiny reaction beams no larger than a rifle bore. At ten miles such a beam would be six inches across, and at forty a bare two feet. He adjusted both to a quickly widening cone and pointed one up, the other down. One would thrust violently against the sand under the yacht, and the other against the sand over it. The surface sand, at least, could rise and be blown away. The sand below would support the yacht against further settling.

He went back to where Esther laid out dishes.

"I've started something," he told her. "One repeller beam points up to make the sand over our heads effectively lighter so it can be blown away more easily. The storm ought to burrow right down to us, with that much help. After we're uncovered, we may, just possibly, be able to work the ship up to the surface. But after that we've got to do something else. The repellers aren't as powerful as a drive, and it's hardly likely we could lift out of gravity on them. Even if we did, we're a few light-centuries from home. To fix our interstellar drive we need the help of our friends of the grid."

Esther paused to stare.

"But they'll try to kill us!" she protested. "They've tried hard! And if they find us we've no weapons at all—not even a hand-blaster!"

"To the contrary," said Stan dryly, "we've probably the most ghastly weapon anybody ever invented—only it won't work on any other planet than this."

Then he grinned at her. Now, he too was out of his space suit. The food he'd asked her to prepare was out on the table, but he ignored it. He took one step toward her. And then there came a muffled sound, picked up by the outside hull-microphones. It grew in volume. It became a roar. Then the yacht shifted position. Its nose tilted upward.

"The first step," said Stan, "is accomplished. I can't stop to dine. But—"

He kissed her hungrily. Five days—six, now—in space suits with the girl one hopes to marry has its drawbacks. An armored arm around the hulking shoulders of another suit of armor—even with a pretty girl inside it—is not satisfying. To hold hands with three-eighth-inch space gloves is less than romantic. And to try to kiss a girl three-quarters buried in a space helmet leaves much to the imagination. Stan kissed her. It took another shifting movement of the yacht, which toppled them the length of the cabin, to make him stop.

Then he laughed and went to the control room.

Vision screens were useless, of course. The little ship was still most of her length under sand, but the repellers' cones of thrust had dug a great pit down to her. Now Stan juggled the repellers to take fullest advantage of the storm. At times—with both beams pushing up—the ship was perceptibly lifted by uprushing air. And Stan could be prodigal with power, now. The skid was sharply limited in its storage of energy, but all the space between the two skins of the *Erebus* was a power bank. It could travel from one rim of the Galaxy to the other without exhausting its store. And the upward lift of whirlwinds—once there were six within ten minutes—and the thrusts of the repellers gradually edged the *Erebus* to the surface.

Before nightfall it no longer lay in a sand pit. It was only half buried in sand. And when the winds died down to merely savage gales, at twilight, and then slowly diminished to more angry gusts, and at long last there was calm without and even the impalpable fine dust that settled last no longer floated in the air, and the stars shone—then Stan was ready.

He turned on the ship's communicator and sent a full-power wave out into the night. He spoke. What he said would be unintelligible, of course, but he said sardonically to the empty desert:

"Yacht *Erebus* calling! Down on the desert, every drive smashed, and not so much as a hand-blaster on board for a weapon. Maybe you'd like to come and get us!"

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Then—and only then—he went and ate the long delayed meal Esther had made ready.

It was half an hour before the microphones gave warning. Then they relayed clankings and poundings and thuddings on the sand. It was the sound of heavy machines marching toward the *Erebus*. Scores of them. The machines separated and encircled the disabled yacht, though they were invisible behind the dunes all about. And then, simultaneously, they closed in.

The landing beams of the *Erebus* flashed out. Light flickered in the chill darkness. The beams darted here and there.

Then the machines appeared. The scene was remarkable. Over the dunes marched gigantic metal monsters, many-legged, with bodies as great as the *Erebus* itself. Great bulges on their forward parts gave the look of eyes, as if these were huge insects marching to devour and destroy. As the landing-light beams flickered from one to another of them, huge metallic tusks appeared, and toothed jaws—used for excavation. They were not machines designed for war, but they were terrifying, and they could be terrible.

Esther's hand on Stan's shoulder trembled as the monsters closed in. And then Stan, in the unarmed and seemingly defenseless little space yacht, swung the meteor-repeller controls and literally cut them to pieces.

"We're barbarians," said Stan, "compared to these folk. So we've an advantage. It's likely to be only temporary, though!"

HE WATCHED the carcasses of the great machines, flicking the landing-light beams back and forth. They were tumbled terribly on the ground. Some were severed in two or three places, and their separate sections sprawled astonishedly on a dune-side. One was split through lengthwise. Another had all of one set of legs cut off clean, and lay otherwise unharmed but utterly helpless.

Out of that incapacitated giant a smaller version of itself crawled. It was like a lifeboat. Stan watched. Other small versions of the great machines appeared. One made a dash at the *Erebus,* and he cut it savagely in two. There was no other attack. Instead, the smaller many-legged machines ran busily from one to another of the wrecks—seeming to gather up survivors—and then went racing away into the dark.

Then there was stillness.

"They knew we saw them," said Stan grimly. "They knew we could smash them. And they realized that we wouldn't unless they attacked again. I wonder what they think of us now?"

"What you did to them was—awful," said Esther. She shuddered. "I still don't know what it was. I never heard of any weapon like that!"

"It could only exist here," said Stan. He grimaced. "We've meteor-repellers. They push away anything in their beam. I narrowed them to their smallest size and put full power into them. That was all."

"But meteor-repellers don't cut!" protested Esther.

"These did," said Stan. "They were working through sand, just that. They pushed it. With a force of eighty tons in a half-inch beam. The sand that was in the beam was shot away with an acceleration of possibly fifty thousand gravities—and more sand kept falling into the beam. Each particle was traveling as fast as a meteor when it hit, over there. When it struck, it simply flared to incandescent vapor. No atomic torch was ever hotter! And there was no end to the sand I threw. You might say I cut those machines up with a sand blast, but there was never such a sand blast as this! It took a barbarian—like me—to think of it!

"Now," he added, "I need to go over to those machines and get some stuff I think they've got in them. That's what I provoked this attack for. But maybe the drivers are laying low to jump on me if I try it. I'll have to wait until nearly dawn. They won't risk waiting until almost time for the sandstorms! Not with fifty miles to travel back to the grid!"

He stayed on guard. Presently he yawned. He stood up and paced back and forth, glancing from time to time at the screen. After a long time Esther said:

"You didn't sleep last night, Stan. Could I watch for a while so you can rest?"

"M'm-m. Yes. If anything stirs, wake me. But I don't look for action here. The real action will be back underground."

He went back into the cabin and threw himself down. Almost instantly he was asleep. Esther watched the vision-plates dutifully. There was silence and stillness everywhere. After a long time she looked in on the sleeping Stan. A little later she looked in again, reached over, and touched his hair gently. Later still she looked in yet again. She kissed him lightly—he did not wake—and went back to the control cabin, to watch the vision-plates.

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Nothing happened.

Out in space, though, very many millions of miles away, a tiny mote winked into existence as if by magic, with the cutting off of its Bowdoin-Hall field drive. It hung seemingly motionless for a while, as if orienting itself. It seemed to locate what it sought—and vanished, but again winked into being a bare few thousand miles from the planet's surface.

It did not disappear again. It drove down toward the half-obscured disk at the normal acceleration of a landing drive. Toward dawn it screamed down into atmosphere above the planet's surface. It drove on into the day, and into howling winds and far-flung sand. It rose swiftly, and went winging toward the summer polar cap.

Khor Alpha's single planet had gone unvisited by men during two centuries of interstellar travel, but now there had been three separate visitations within ten days.

The last of the three visitors settled to ground where hoarfrost partly whitened the desert's face. A full-power carrier-wave spread out from it. And in the control room of the *Erebus* a speaker suddenly barked savagely:

"Stan Buckley! I'm here to kill you! Communicate!"

Esther gasped. She recognized the voice. Rob Torren! Back more than two months before Stan had expected him! The words did not make sense to her. Stan had tried to spare her despair by concealing the fact that Torren's return would be to kill him, under a compact which her presence here made void.

"Rob!" cried Esther softly into the transmitter. "Rob Torren! It's Esther calling! Esther Hume!"

An indescribable sound from the speaker. With trembling hands she adjusted the vision receiver. She looked into the taut, drawn, raging features of Rob Torren. He stared at her out of the screen.

"Stan's asleep, Rob!" cried Esther eagerly. "He didn't expect you back for a long time yet! You're wondering how I got here? Oh—"

Laughing a little, joyously, she told of her desperate voyage to be with Stan when he should be tried, and how her drive had been burnt out by impinging on the drive of the space skid on which Stan had left the *Stallifer*. And of course she told of her subsequent meeting with Stan.

"And there are inhabitants here," she finished eagerly, "and they've been trying to kill us."

She was all joy and relief at Torren's arrival. But his face was ravaged by conflicting emotions, all of them intense and all harrowing.

"But—what's the matter, Rob?" she asked. "You look so queer!" Then she added in abrupt, startled doubt. "And Rob! Why did you say you had come back to kill Stan? You were joking, weren't you?"

He raged at her instantly. "He coached you, eh? To pretend you didn't know anything? Trying to make me take you both to safety on a promise of fighting me later? It won't work! I've a line on your wave and I'll be coming! I'll be coming fast! And maybe you've no weapons, but I have! I've a Space Guard one-man ship! I forced the *Stallifer* to dock at Lora Beta and put me ashore! I got this ship to hunt back for Stan, claiming his recapture as my responsibility! I did plan to have him write you a letter before I killed him, but since you know everything now—"

She saw the beginning of an infuriated movement. Then the screen went blank.

After a moment's frightened irresolution she went to Stan. She woke him, and after the first three words he was sternly alert.

"This sets things up nicely!" he said bitterly. "You didn't know about him, of course, but—our friends of the grid are concocting weapons to destroy us, and now he's streaking here along his locator line to blast us with everything a Space Guard ship can carry! And he'll have long-range stuff! He can burn us to a crisp if we put a repeller beam on him! We can't sand-blast him! We can't—"

He began to struggle swiftly into a space suit. Esther said:

"Wherever you're going, I'm going too!"

"You're not!" he said harshly. "You'll go in the control room with your hands on the beam controls. If some of the local citizens are hiding in those wrecks, you'll smash them if they jump me! I haven't so much as a pocketknife! You've got to be my weapons while I dig into those wrecks!"

HE WENT swiftly out the air-lock with only a cutting-torch in his hands. He fairly ran toward the débris of the attacking army of machines. He reached the first. It had been sliced longitudinally in half by a stream of sand particles traveling at fifty miles or better per second, in a stream of air of the same velocity. Nothing could have withstood such an attack. No material substance in the universe could have resisted it. Four-inch plates of steel and foot-thick girders had been

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cut through like so much dough, the severed edges gone not to liquid but to vapor in the deadly stream.

The whole mechanism of the machine was exposed. The great biting jaws, designed to tear away huge masses of intermingled sand and ice. The tusks to break loose sections for the jaws to handle. The tanks to contain the precious damp material. The machine had not been made for fighting, but it, alone, could have torn the *Erebus* to fragments. With an army of such machines—

Stan clambered into the neatly halved shell with his cutting-torch. All about him were small devices, cryptic things, the strictly practical contrivances of a hundred-thousand-year-old civilization. He itched to examine them, but he needed certain bars of allotropic graphite he suspected would be here. They were. The motors which ran the leg movements were motors like those which turned the great slabs. They consisted of slabs of graphite and the metal which slid past them. That was all. Only one special allotrope of graphite makes a motor of such simplicity. Only—

He burdened himself with black, flaky bars, cutting ruthlessly through machinery to which an engineer would have devoted months of study. He had an even dozen of the bars in his arms when a sudden blast rocked him. He whirled, and saw a small cloud of still incandescent vapor and Something which was separating horribly into many steaming pieces. Other Things seemed to leap to smother him under their weight. He could not see them save as vague shapes, but he knew they were there.

Another exploded as Esther, in the *Erebus* and watching with the infrared scanner, desperately used the weapon which had never existed before and could not be used anywhere save on this one planet.

Stan ran clumsily for the ship over the drifting, powdery sand. Inhumanly resolute unhuman things leaped after him. He saw the flares as Esther destroyed them. He knew that she was wide eyed and trembling and sick with horror at what she had to do.

But he stumbled into the air-lock and dogged it shut behind him. And Esther came running to greet him, not shaking and not trembling and not horrified, but with burning eyes and the fiery anger of a Valkyrie. She was not wearing her space suit.

"They tried to kill you!" she cried fiercely. "They were hiding! They'd have murdered you—"

He put down his bars of allotropic graphite. He reached out to take her in his arms. But—

"Damn these space suits!" he said furiously. "You'll have to wait to be kissed until this job's finished!"

He tore up the flooring hatch above the little ship's drive. He jerked off the housing.

"Keep watch!" he called to the control room. "At least one of the machines must be waiting behind the dunes, hoping for a break!"

He worked with frantic haste, shedding his space suit by convulsive movements. This should have been the most finicky of fine-fitting jobs. To repair a Bowdoin-Hall drive unit by replacing its graphite bars for maximum efficiency is a matter for micrometric precision. But efficiency was not what he wanted, now, but speed. And these bars almost fitted. They were vastly unlike the five-hundred-pound monsters for the grid slabs. These should at least move the ship, and if the ship could be moved—

He had two of them in place and six more to go when the speaker in the control room blared triumphantly.

"Stan Buckley! Tune in! I'm right above your ship! Tune in!"

Stan swore in a sick disgust. Two out of eight was not enough. He was helpless for lack, now, of time. And the corrosive hatred that comes of helplessness filled him. He went into the control room and said drearily to Esther:

"Sorry, my dear. Another twenty minutes and you'd have been safe. I think we lose."

He kissed her, and with fury-steadied fingers tuned in the communication-plate. Rob Torren grinned furiously at him.

"I thought I'd let you know what's happening," said Torren in a voice that was furry with whipped-up rage. "I'm going to go back and report that you were killed resisting arrest. I'm going to melt down the yacht until it could never be identified as the *Erebus*—if anybody ever sees it again! And—maybe you'll enjoy knowing that I did the things I charged you with, and have the proceeds safely banked away! I faked the evidence that proved it on you. And I hoped to have Esther, too, but she's spoiled that by trying to come and help you! Now—"

"Now," said Stan coldly, "you'll stand off a good twenty miles and beam us. You'll

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take no chances that we might be able to throw a handful of sand at you! You'll be so damned cautious that you won't even come close to see your success with your own eyes! You'll read it off on instruments! You're pretty much afraid of me!"

"Afraid?" raged Rob Torren. "You'll see!"

The communication screen went blank. Stan leaped to the meteor-repeller controls and stared at the vertical vision-plate which showed all the sky above.

"Not the shadow of a chance," he said coldly, "but a beam does make a little glow! If he misses us once—but he won't—maybe I can get in one blast. . . ."

There was tense silence. Deadly silence. The screen overhead showed a multitude of cold, unwinking stars. One of them winked out and on again.

"I'll try—" began Stan.

Then the screen seemed to explode into light. Something flared like a nova in the sky. Intolerable brilliance filled a quarter of the screen—and faded. Swiftly. It went out.

Stan drew a deep breath.

"That," he said softly, "I think was a hundred thousand million horsepower in a power beam. I think our friends the grid makers have been working on armament to fight us with, and I think they've got something quite good! They don't like strangers. Torren was a stranger, and they got a shot at him, and they took it. And now they'll get set to come over here after us. If you'll excuse me, I'll go back to the drive!"

He returned to the cabin where two out of a necessary eight graphite bars were in place. He worked. Fast. No man ever worked so fast or so fiercely or with such desperately steady hands. In twenty minutes he made the last, the final connection. And just as he dropped the hatch in place, Esther called anxiously:

"More machines coming, Stan! The microphones pick them up!"

"Coming!" he told her briskly. He went to the instrument board and threw switches here and there. "The normal thing," he said evenly, "would be to lift from the ground here, on landing drive, and go into field drive out of atmosphere. But we won't do it for two reasons. One is that we have no landing drive. The other is that at normal take-off acceleration, our friends of the grid would take a potshot at us with the thing they used on Rob Torren. With a hundred thousand million horsepower. So—here goes!"

He stabbed a simple push button.

With no perceptible interval and with no sensation of movement, the *Erebus* was out in deep space. The screens showed stars on every side—all the stars of the Galaxy. And these were not the hostile, immobile, unfriendly stars the first voyagers of space had seen. With the Bowdoin-Hall field collapsing forty times a second, the stars moved visibly. The nearer ones moved more swiftly and the farther ones more slowly, but all moved. The cosmos seemed very small and almost cosy, and the stars mere fireflies and the Rim itself no more than a few miles away from them.

Stan watched. He said, "We're not making much time. Not over six hundred lights, I'd say. But we'll get there."

"And—and when we do—"

"H'm," said Stan. "You can swear Torren said he'd committed the crimes he charged me with and faked the evidence against me. With that testimony, they'll examine the evidence as they do when there are no witnesses. It'll fall down. And I'll be cleared."

"Stan!" said Esther indignantly. "I meant—"

"And when I'm cleared," said Stan, "we'll get married."

"That," admitted Esther, "is what I had in mind."

He kissed her, and stood watching the moving cosmos critically.

"Our friends the grid builders have gotten waked up now," he observed. "They know they're not the only intelligent race in the universe, and they may not like it. They're a fretful crew! But they'll have to be made friends with. And quick, or they might cause trouble! I think I'll apply to be assigned to the task force that will undertake the job. It ought to be interesting! Not a dull moment!"

Esther scowled at him.

"Now," she protested, "you reduce me to being glad we're not making our proper speed! Because after you get back—"

"Listen, my dear," said Stan generously, "I'll promise to come home from time to time. And when I do I'll grab you like this, and kiss you like this—" There was an interlude. "And do you think you'll manage to survive?"

Esther gasped for breath. But she was smiling.

"I—I think I'll be able to stand it," she admitted.

"Good!" said Stan. "Now let's go have some breakfast!"

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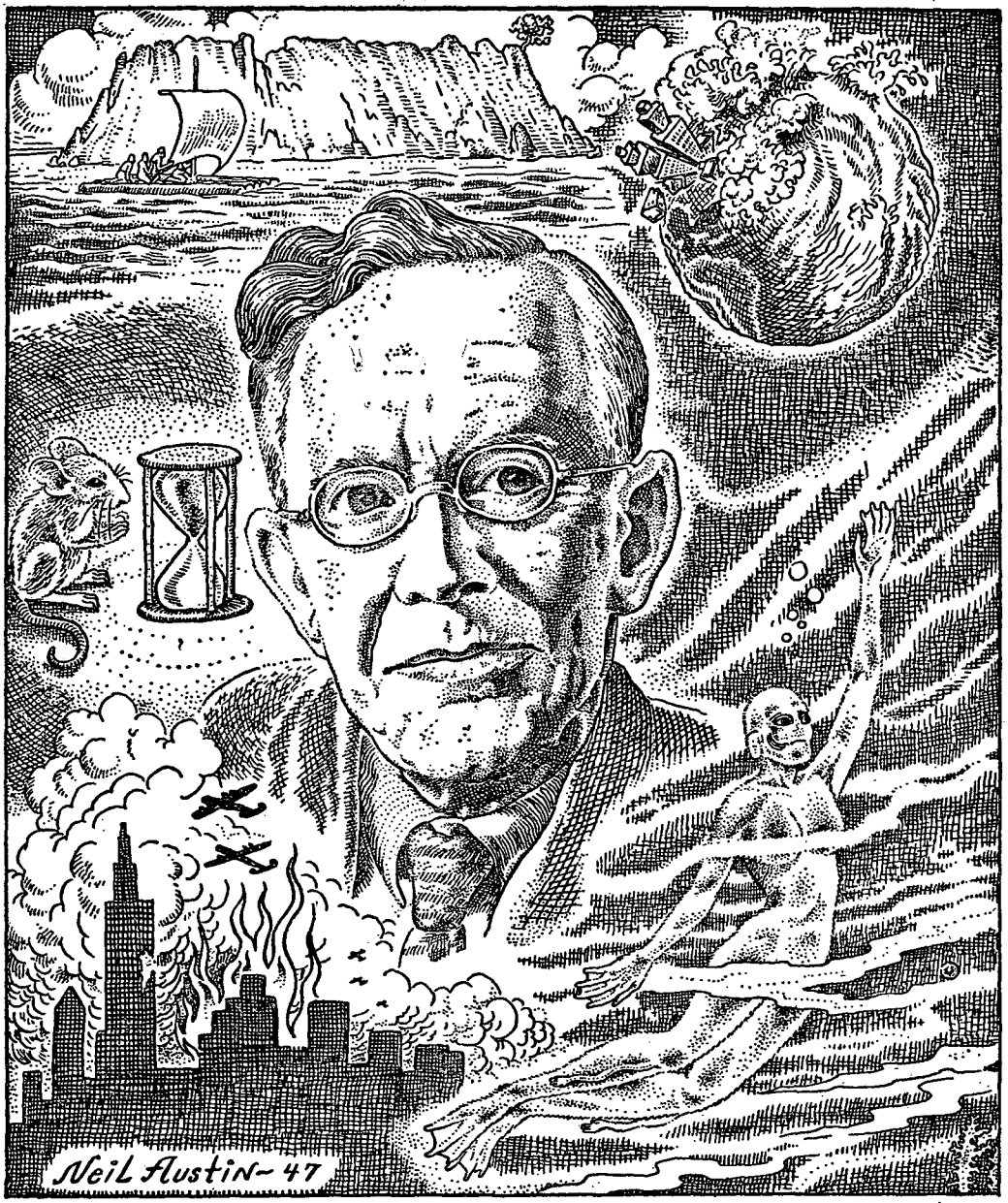

MASTERS OF FANTASY

Sydney Fowler Wright—Worlds of Wonder—Born 6 January 1874

Had he never penned another fantasy, S. Fowler Wright would have carved an enduring niche for himself in the hall of fame with his imaginative masterpiece, "The World Below". Epic romance of our alien earth a half million years hence! But besides this awe-inspiring glimpse into futurity (the first portion of which was separately printed as "The Amphibian") he has authored many other prophetic and fantastic novels, among them "Deluge" and its sequel, "Dawn"; "The Island of Captain Sparrow", published in F.F.M.; and "Dream". With Wells, Stapledon, Machen, Blackwood and confrères he stands as one of England's major contributors to the realm of imaginative literature.

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THE LONESOME PLACE

By August Derleth

YOU WHO sit in your houses of nights, you who sit in the theaters, you who are gay at dances and parties—all you who are enclosed by four walls—you have no conception of what goes on outside in the dark. In the lonesome places. And there are so many of them, all over—in the country, in the small towns, in the cities. If you were out in the evenings, in the night, you would know about them, you would pass them and wonder, perhaps, and if you were a small boy you might be frightened. Frightened the way Johnny Newell and I were frightened, the way thousands of small boys from one end of the country to the other are being frightened when they have to go out alone at night, past lonesome places, dark and lightless, sombre and haunted . . .

I want you to understand that if it had not been for the lonesome place at the grain elevator, the place with the big old trees and the sheds up close to the sidewalk, and the piles of lumber—if it had not been for that place Johnny Newell and I would never have been guilty of murder. I say it even if there is nothing the law can do about it. They cannot touch us, but it is true, and I know, and Johnny knows, but we never talk about it, we never say anything. It is just something we keep here, behind our eyes, deep in our thoughts where it is a fact which is lost among thousands of others, but no less there, something we know beyond cavil.

It goes back a long way. But as time goes, perhaps it not long. We were young, we were little boys in a small town. Johnny lived three houses away and across the street from me, and both of us lived in the block west of the grain elevator. We were never afraid to go past the lonesome place together. But we were not often together. Sometimes one of us had to go that way alone, sometimes the other. I went that way most of the time—there was no other, except to go far around, because that was the straight way down town, and I had to walk there, when my father was too tired to go.

In the evenings it would happen like this. My mother would discover that she had no sugar or salt or bologna, and she would say, "Steve, you go down town and get it. Your father's too tired."

I would say, "I don't wanna."

She would say, "You go."

I would say, "I can go in the morning before school."

She would say, "You go now. I don't want to hear another word out of you. Here's the money."

And I would have to go.

Going down was never quite so bad, because most of the time there was still some afterglow in the west, and a kind of pale light lay there, a luminousness, like part of the day lingering there, and

Some ghastly presence lurked in that Cimmerian darkness, waiting to pounce . . . but the grown-up world remained deaf to all warnings—until. . . .

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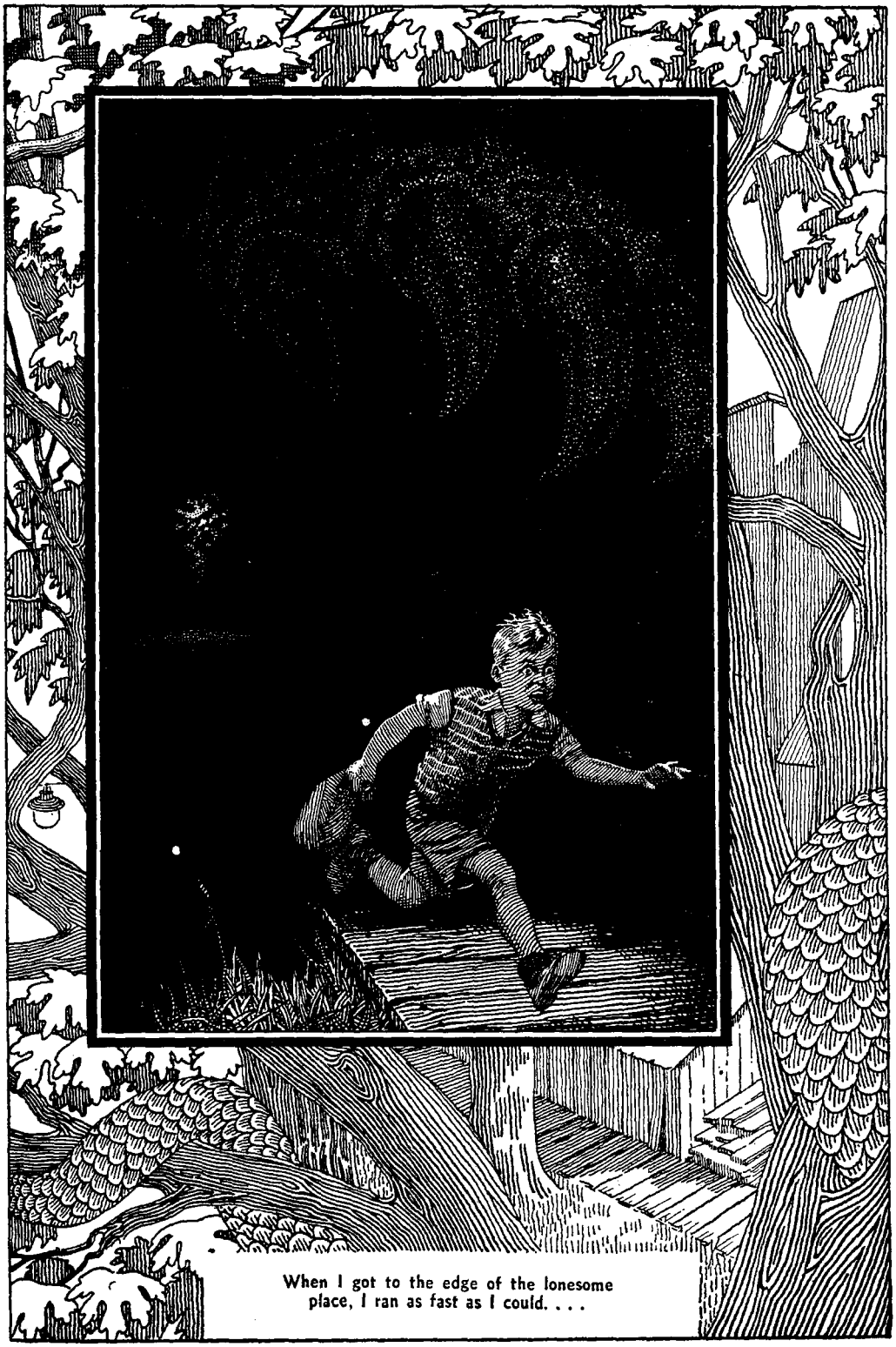

When I got to the edge of the lonesome place, I ran as fast as I could. . . .

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all around town you could hear the kids hollering in the last hour they had to play, and you felt somehow not alone. You could go down into that dark place under the trees and you would never think of being lonesome. But when you came back—that was different. When you came back the afterglow was gone; if the stars were out, you could never see them for the trees, and though the streetlights were on—the old fashioned lights arched over the cross-roads—not a ray of them penetrated the lonesome place near to the elevator. There it was, half a block long, black as black could be, dark as the deepest night, with the shadows of the trees making it a solid place of darkness, with the faint glow of light where a streetlight pooled at the end of the street. Far away it seemed, and that other glow behind, where the other corner light lay.

And when you came that way you walked slower and slower. Behind you lay the brightly lit stores; all along the way there had been houses, with lights in the windows and music playing and voices of people sitting to talk on their porches. But up there, ahead of you, there was the lonesome place, with no house nearby, and up beyond it the tall, dark grain elevator, gaunt and forbidding. The lonesome place of trees and sheds and lumber, in which anything might be lurking, anything at all. The lonesome place where you were sure that something haunted the darkness waiting for the moment and the hour and the night when you came through to burst forth from its secret place and leap upon you, tearing you and rending you and doing the unmentionable things before it had done for you.

That was the lonesome place. By day it was oak and maple trees over a hundred years old, low enough so that you could almost touch the big spreading limbs; it was sheds and lumber piles which were seldom disturbed; it was a sidewalk and long grass, never mowed or kept down until late fall, when somebody burned it off; it was a shady place in the hot summer days where some cool air always lingered. You were never afraid of it by day, but by night it was a different place.

For, then, it was lonesome, away from sight or sound, a place of darkness and strangeness, a place of terror for little boys haunted by a thousand fears.

AND EVERY night, coming home from town, it happened like this. I would walk slower and slower, the closer I got to the lonesome place. I would think of every way around it. I would keep hoping somebody would come along, so that I could walk with him, Mr. Newell, maybe, or old Mrs. Potter, who lived farther up the street, or Reverend Bislor, who lived at the end of the block beyond the grain elevator. But nobody ever came. At this hour it was too soon after supper for them to go out, or, already out, too soon for them to return. So I walked slower and slower, until I got to the edge of the lonesome place—and then I ran as fast as I could, sometimes with my eyes closed.

Oh, I knew what was there, all right. I knew there was something in that dark, lonesome place. Perhaps it was the bogeyman. Sometimes my grandmother spoke of him, of how he waited in dark places for bad boys and girls. Perhaps it was an ogre. I knew about ogres in the books of fairy tales. Perhaps it was something else, something worse. I ran. I ran hard. Every blade of grass, every leaf, every twig that touched me was *its* hand reaching for me. The sound of my footsteps slapping the sidewalk were *its* steps pursuing. The hard breathing which was my own became *its* breathing in its frantic struggle to reach me, to rend and tear me, to imbue my soul with terror.

I would burst out of that place like a flurry of wind, fly past the gaunt elevator, and not pause until I was safe in the yellow glow of the familiar streetlight. And then, in a few steps, I was home.

And mother would say, "For the Lord's sake, have you been running on a hot night like this?"

I would say, "I hurried."

"You didn't have to hurry that much. I don't need it till breakfast time."

And I would say, "I coulda got it in the morning. I coulda run down before breakfast. Next time, that's what I'm gonna do."

Nobody would pay any attention.

Some nights Johnny had to go down town, too. Things then weren't the way they are today, when every woman makes a ritual of afternoon shopping and seldom forgets anything.

In those days, they didn't go down town so often, and when they did, they had such lists they usually forgot something. And after Johnny and I had been through the lonesome place on the same night, we compared notes next day.

"Did you see anything?" he would ask.

"No, but I heard it," I would say.

"I felt it," he would whisper tensely. "It's got big, flat clawed feet. You know

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what has got the ugliest feet around?"

"Sure, one of those stinking yellow softshell turtles."

"It's got feet like that. Oh, ugly, and soft, and sharp claws! I saw one out of the corner of my eye," he would say.

"Did you see its face?" I would ask.

"It ain't got no face. Cross my heart an' hope to die, there ain't no face. That's worse'n if there was one."

Oh, it was a horrible beast—not an animal, not a man—that lurked in the lonesome place and came forth predatorily at night, waiting there for us to pass. It grew like this, out of our mutual experiences. We discovered that it had scales, and a great long tail, like a dragon. It breathed from somewhere, hot as fire, but it had no face and no mouth in it, just a horrible opening in its throat. It was as big as an elephant, but it did not look like anything so friendly. It belonged there in the lonesome place; it would never go away; that was its home, and it had to wait for its food to come to it—the unwary boys and girls who had to pass through the lonesome place at night.

How I tried to keep from going near the lonesome place after dark!

"Why can't Mady go?" I would ask.

"Mady's too little," mother would answer.

"I'm not so big."

"Oh, shush! You're a big boy now. You're going to be seven years old. Just think of it."

"I don't think seven is old," I would say. I didn't, either. Seven wasn't nearly old enough to stand up against what was in the lonesome place.

"Your Sears-Roebuck pants are long ones," she would say.

"I don't care about any old Sears-Roebuck pants. I don't wanna go."

" I want you to go. You never get up early enough in the morning."

"But I will. I promise I will. I promise, Ma!" I would cry out.

"Tomorrow morning it will be a different story. No, you go."

That was the way it went every time. I had to go. And Mady was the only one who guessed. "Fraidycat," she would whisper. Even she never really knew. She never had to go through the lonesome place after dark. They kept her at home. She never knew how something could lie up in those old trees, lie right along those old limbs across the sidewalk and drop down without a sound, clawing and tearing, something without a face, with ugly clawed feet like a softshell turtle's, with scales and a tail like a dragon, something as big as a house, all black, like the darkness in that place.

But Johnny and I knew.

"It almost got me last night," he would say, his voice low, looking anxiously out of the woodshed where we sat, as if *it* might hear us.

"Gee, I'm glad it didn't," I would say. "What was it like?"

"Big and black. Awful black. I looked around when I was running, and all of a sudden there wasn't any light way back at the other end. Then I knew it was coming. I ran like everything to get out of there. It was almost on me when I got away. Look there!"

And he would show me a rip in his shirt where a claw had come down.

"And you?" he would ask excitedly, big-eyed. "What about you?"

"It was back behind the lumber piles when I came through," I said. "I could just feel it waiting. I was running, but it got right up—you look, there's a pile of lumber tipped over there."

And we would walk down into the lonesome place in midday and look. Sure enough, there would be a pile of lumber tipped over, and we would look to where something had been lying down, the grass all pressed down. Sometimes we would find a handkerchief and wonder whether *it* had caught somebody.

Then we would go home and wait to hear if anyone was missing, speculating apprehensively all the way home whether *it* had got Mady or Christine or Helen, or any one of the girls in our class or Sunday School. Or, whether maybe *it* had got Miss Doyle, the young primary-grades teacher who had to walk that way sometimes after supper. But no one was ever reported missing, and the mystery grew. Maybe *it* had got some stranger who happened to be passing by and didn't know about the Thing that lived there in the lonesome place. We were sure *it* had got somebody.

"Some night I won't come back, you'll see," I would say.

"Oh, don't be silly," my mother would say.

What do grown-up people know about the things boys are afraid of? Oh, hickory switches and such like, they know that. But what about what goes on in their minds when they have to come home alone at night through the lonesome places? What do they know about lonesome places where no light from the street-corner ever

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comes? What do they know about a place and time when a boy is very small and very alone, and the night is as big as the town, and the darkness is the whole world? When grown-ups are big, old people who cannot understand anything, no matter how plain?

A boy looks up and out, but he can't look very far when the trees bend down over and press close, when the sheds rear up along one side and the trees on the other, when the darkness lies like a cloud along the sidewalk and the arc-lights are far, far away. No wonder, then, that Things grow in the darkness of lonesome places the way *it* grew in that dark place near the grain elevator. No wonder a boy runs like the wind until his heartbeats sound like a drum and push up to suffocate him.

"You're white as a sheet," Mother would say sometimes. "You've been running again."

"You don't have to run," my father would say. "Take it easy."

"I ran," I would say. I wanted the worst way to say I had to run and to tell them why I had to. But I knew they wouldn't believe me any more than Johnny's parents believed him when he told them, as he did once.

He got a licking with a strap and had to go to bed.

I never got licked. I never told them.

But now it must be told, now it must be set down.

FOR A LONG time we forgot about the lonesome place. We grew older and we grew bigger. We went on through school into high school, and somehow we forgot about the Thing in the lonesome place. That place never changed. The trees grew older. Sometimes the lumber piles were bigger or smaller. Once the sheds were painted—red, like blood. Seeing them that way the first time, I remembered. Then I forgot again. We took to playing baseball and basketball and football. We began to swim in the river and to date the girls. We never talked about the Thing in the lonesome place any more, and when we went through there at night it was like something forgotten that lurked back in a corner of the mind. We thought of something we ought to remember, but never could quite remember; that was the way it seemed—like a memory locked away, far away in childhood. We never ran through that place, and sometimes it was even a good place to walk through with a girl, because she always snuggled up close and said how spooky it was there under the overhanging trees. But even then we never lingered there, not exactly lingered; we didn't run through there, but we walked without faltering or loitering, no matter how pretty a girl she was.

The years went past, and we never thought about the lonesome place again.

We never thought how there would be other little boys going through it at night, running with fast-beating hearts, breathless with terror, anxious for the safety of the arc-light beyond the margin of the shadow which confined the dweller in that place, the light-fearing creature that haunted the dark, like so many terrors dwelling in similar lonesome places in the cities and small towns and countrysides all over the world, waiting to frighten little boys and girls, waiting to invade them with horror and unshakable fear—waiting for something more . . . .

Three nights ago little Bobby Jeffers was killed in the lonesome place. He was all mauled and torn and partly crushed, as if something big had fallen on him. Johnny, who was on the Village Board, went to look at the place, and after he had been there, he telephoned me to go, too, before other people walked there.

I went down and saw the marks, too. It was just as the coroner said, only not an "animal of some kind," as he put it. Something with a dragging tail, with scales, with great clawed feet—and I knew it had no face.

I knew, too, that Johnny and I were guilty. We had murdered Bobby Jeffers because the thing that killed him was the thing Johnny and I had created out of our childhood fears and left in that lonesome place to wait for some scared little boy at some minute in some hour during some dark night, a little boy who, like fat Bobby Jeffers, couldn't run as fast as Johnny and I could run.

And the worst is not that there is nothing to do, but that the lonesome place is being changed. The village is cutting down some of the trees now, removing the sheds, and putting up a streetlight in the middle of that place; it will not be dark and lonesome any longer, and the Thing that lives there will have to go somewhere else, where people are unsuspecting, to some other lonesome place in some other small town or city or countryside, where it will wait as it did here, for some frightened little boy or girl to come along, waiting in the dark and the lonesomeness. . . .

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The Readers' Viewpoint

Address comments to the Letter Editor, Famous Fantastic Mysteries,
All-Fiction Field, Inc., 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York

VIVIAN'S NOVEL EXCELLENT

Dear Editor:

I have just finished reading the October issue of F.F.M. and here's my penny's worth.

Vivian's novel is one of the best you have published since September of '45 (Arnold's "Phra the Phoenician"), to my poor way of thinking. It is written well, presents real, tangible characters, and presents a refreshing relief from some of the end-of-the-world novels that you have published in the last year.

Congratulations on the resumption of printing poetry. I'm sure most, if not all, of your readers will be at least as happy as I am about this.

I, personally, am lifted to the heights of joy because you have increased the space devoted to "The Readers' Viewpoint" in some recent issues.

As if all this is not enough, the illustrations are nothing short of wonderful. Lawrence's cover is, to use a small and insignificant adjective, superb. Finlay's picture on page 55 is truly a work of art. The others are good, but I don't think that they quite measure up to that one.

Orchids to you on your marvelous issue, and here's hoping you soon will publish F.F.M. monthly.

JOHN R. TISDALE.

1730 Third Ave. SE,
Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

OUT AND OUT FANTASY

If "The City of Wonder" is a little breezy in parts, I think that it is safe to say that author Vivian has made up for it by making his story an excellent fantastic adventure to the *n*th degree.

No one can complain about the plot. It was just what we wanted—no fall-of-civilization, no skeletons, no symbolism. An out and out fantasy.

The author's style compares in some places favorably with that of Haggard and Merritt. Most fantasies written for book publication originally seem fairly conservative compared with their magazine brethren. Not so here. Vivian stopped at no bounds! Both the author and the editors are to be congratulated on a splendid job well done.

The short was nothing to rave about but on the other hand I can find no major faults with it.

If, on the cover, Lawrence had left off the maiden, it might have been for the better. If a fantasy magazine is supposed to cater to the fantastic and out-of-the-ordinary then let me say that I for one can think of nothing less unusual than a pin-up girl today.

Still, it *is* good to see that you are giving both cover artists a fair deal.

Above all, never change the cover plan of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* for as has been mentioned before, and rightly so, "it just wouldn't be the same mag without it!"

Your friend fan-tasteek,
BRAD DE REVERE.

356 St. Paul's Ave.,
Stapleton 4, Staten Island, N. Y.

ALL ABOUT EVERYTHING

This suggestion may be received by the majority of your readers with an air of "how dare this character suggest such a thing?" or "people like that should drop dead," but I'll stick to my sizzlepistols undauntedly.

Said suggestion is to wit: Why not have a humorous novel gracing your pages for a change!

Since its inception in '39, F.F.M. has offered all sorts of reading fare; the "best" (pardon the quotation marks, but some critics don't hold that viewpoint) in science and fantasy fiction. The intelligencia of the prozine devotees have had their supposed minds challenged by thought-stimulating ideas, or have had those previously mentioned supposed minds filled with thoughts of terror and ghoulish delight. However, to my knowledge, F.F.M. has never run a novel based strictly on humor. 'Tiz true that some of the stories have had traces of the quality, but they were founded on some entirely different idea.

What type of humor would I suggest? Any type, as long as it makes interesting reading. The semi-sophisticated fantasies of Thorne Smith make delightful reading, but the majority of these are readily obtainable. Besides, after seeing Thorne Smith in these hallowed pages, probably a good two-thirds of your circulation would vanish overnight.

What does somebody else think about that novel suggestion—in printable phrases, of course?

So much for the future; let's take a look at the past.

Whatever, dear editor, would you do if the lost civilization theme would vanish? Is further comment necessary?

Really, "City of Wonder" was rather interesting in a way. Particularly amusing was the use of an old and ancient stereotype found usually in Western publications. The "Pore Nell has been shot thru the haid by one of Black Jake's sidewinders. Ah'll git that thar varmint or die tryin'" form and its various equivalents have been exploited for years, but since Mr. Vivian is an English author he may be forgiven. The novel began rather slowly, but soon developed into its form. As a whole it was a pass-

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able story—interesting to read the first time, but boring on the second glance.

My only wish is that you would depart from that theme for at least two issues in a row. Use a humorous novel for a change.

Oh, for the days of Merritt.

Leinster's scientitale was much better, but it seems that in 150 years, at least a few of our American idioms would alter in use and/or meaning. Outside of "deepies" and "snoopers" the speech was exactly twentieth century Americanese. After all, look at the improvement (?) in the last century and a half. I still like the story!

It was Lawrence's turn on the cover, and he did a very nice job of it. His colors blended superbly, with the pale blue complexion of the black-browed hero dominating everything in sight. At a glance on the inside, we find an excellent Bok on page 107. Bok is especially suited for weird and horror illustrations, but his style is a trifle too unusual for scientification—a fact which several editors have ignored in the past. As for Finlay—well, I don't know whether it's me or the illustrations, but the boy is slipping. The only thing that was up to his usual delectable standard was the gal-ghoul thing on page 87. Of course the stuff that he is turning out now is still superior to the work done by other members of the paint and pencil pack, but lately Virg seems to be in a rut. I hope the guy snaps out of it, because he used to turn out some really terrific masterpieces.

Napolli is a trifle too sketchy.

Now we came to the most important and enjoyable part of any prozine—the reader's section. The Reader's Viewpoint is a rather novel department. As it stands today, it serves as a combination of an ordinary letter column, a trading post, a bulletin board, a personnel column, and a correspondence corner—a conglomeration of everything under this or any other sun. It's quite large, which is as a letter section should be. Some of the letters printed are rather dated, but that is probably due to the amount received. I've always enjoyed reading the ravings of the frustrated little geniuses which make up scientifantasy's clientele, and the Kidders' Korner is worth the price of the magazine alone. Now that the paper shortage has lessened, why not add a few more pages? After all, the more people see their name in print, the more people will buy the magazine, and you will have increased circulation!

Incidentally, just to go along with the crowd, I'll say that I too have hundreds of back issues for sale (back to '26) and if anyone is sucker enough to waste a postcard or a letter, he's liable to find that particular gem that he's been looking for. No trade-ins required, no references, just leave your terminal-leave bonds as a down-payment. Oh, yeah, if there is a record collector in the crowd, drop a line. Bebop or Fig makes no difference, as long as it's music.

So much for the commercial, shall we get back to the program?

Pardon another suggestion, but as long as almost everyone else is dropping hints for the F.F.M. contents page, I might as well put in a plug for a story. It's "The Killer and the Slain" by Hugh Walpole. It's a fantasy, though not humorous, by an English author, which is strictly for the "I believe a spirit can occupy another's body" school. However, it is suited admirably for these pages.

Artists? One reader suggested Paul. I'm all for that, with this exception. If he ever comes FFMward, let him illustrate scientifiction only, and limit him to machines. His machines still remain the model for all artists since those of "the good old days" and probably shall, but his people appear rather artificial. Magarian would fit into these leaves quite nicely, and you already have Finlay. Lawrence is better on covers than interiors, but a little variety is called for once in a while. Don't let Bok scamper away, but give him stuff to do which is down his alley.

Keep the Readers' Viewpoint at its present high standard. Too many of your competitors have allowed their columns to degenerate into something that is not describable. If I used words, they would be DEROgatory.

Go monthly if possible, but if you do, don't let quantity interfere with quality. F.F.M. is on the upgrade now, and with a slight improvement of material could easily have the largest circulation of 'em all. Nope, F.F.M. is not my favorite magazine, like most of the readers think it is their favorite magazine. I have no favorite.

Well, that's about that for this, the October issue of F.F.M. Remember, readers, effen y'all have been tearing your hair over a certain magazine, glue it back on and communicate. Easy terms. Ninety day guarantee. And record collectors—let's do some DISCussing, what say?

As for you, dear editor, keep up the excellent work.

No matter what the other little gnomes think, I *like* the magazine.

Of course, a humorous novel would help a lot. . . .

Quasi-seriously,
DECIL.

170 "C" St., Apt. 2,
Upland, Calif.

WANTS SCIENCE-FICTION WRITERS' MANUAL

I am interested in trying to write science-fiction. Can you tell me if there is any book on the subject, or do I just have to study the regular books on general fiction? This is such a specialized subject that I don't see how the average instruction book can take you very far in your objective.

ARTHUR ALLEN.

Editor's Note: We have heard rumors of a book on the science of science fiction writing just recently brought out, in which seven different successful writers in the field describe their methods. We suggest you write to Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, P. O. Box 159, Reading, Pennsylvania, who probably knows all of these authors and can give you some advice on how to get the book.

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MOSKOWITZ ANSWERS DERLETH

On page 118 of "The Readers' Viewpoint" in the December, 1947 issue of F.F.M., August W. Derleth went to some pains to disprove the statement of Arthur Cox on page 125 of "The Readers' Viewpoint" in the October, 1947 issue of F.F.M. that "The Willows" by Algernon Blackwood was H. P. Lovecraft's "favorite" story.

In all justice to Mr. Cox I think that this "correction" of Mr. Derleth's should be clarified so that the readers of F.F.M. will not get the wrong impression as to what authority Mr. Cox referred.

All Derleth is saying is that Lovecraft did not in so many words specify an *individual* story as his "favorite", but Mr. Cox had excellent grounds for his statement which was obviously derived from the last known listing of weird tales by Lovecraft which was published through the courtesy of H. C. Koenig on page 22 of the October, 1934 issue of "The Fantasy Fan" under the title of "The *Favorite* Weird Stories" of H. P. Lovecraft. On this list "The Willows" by Algernon Blackwood is *first* in order. On page 67 of his book "HPL: a memoir", August Derleth quoting a list obtained from B. K. Hart which *precedes* The Fantasy Fan list, also has "The Willows" placing *first*.

"The Fantasy Fan" list was included in an issue dedicated to Lovecraft, and containing a great deal of other material by him. Lovecraft was alive at the time and undoubtedly received a copy for he contributed generously to later issues as well. Lovecraft never made any correction in print to this list, so it is reasonable to assume that he was satisfied with it just as published. In "H.P.L.: a memoir", Derleth calls his earlier list "Lovecraft's choice of 'the best' in the field of the weird short story." There is no such limiting statement appended to the later list, neither is there any hint that the list is not in chronological order. In fact the later list deliberately points out that its 10th choice, "The Moon Pool", is the original novelette version, and not the novelized combination with its sequel, thereby offering reasonable evidence that novels as well as shorts were considered in the compiling of the list.

I think in view of the foregoing that Mr. Cox's statement had a reasonable derivation in fact and that Mr. Derleth's arguments lie in the realm of semantics.

SAM MOSKOWITZ.

446 Jelliff Ave.,
Newark 8, N. J.

P. S. In his scholarly essay, "Supernatural Horror in Literature", H. P. Lovecraft said of "The Willows" by Algernon Blackwood: "Here art and restraint in narrative reach their very highest development, and an impression of lasting poignancy is produced without a single strained passage or a single false note."

MR. BENCE TO MR. DERLETH

Re. August Derleth's correction, in the December issue of F.F.M., of Arthur Cox's statement regarding Lovecraft's preference for Algernon Blackwood's "The Willows". Has Mr. Derleth forgotten what his own firm publishes? On page xiv of "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," a volume of Lovecraft stories put out in 1943 by Arkham House (of which Mr. Derleth is owner, or co-owner), Lovecraft, in his autobiography, distinctly states *"The greatest weird tale ever written is probably Algernon Blackwood's "The Willows"*. If this is not expressing a preference (call it "favoritism", if you will) then what is? Lovecraft wrote this autobiography in November, 1933, four years after he had compiled the list that Mr. Derleth refers to.

Furthermore, on page 67 of Mr. Derleth's own work, "HPL: a memoir," Algernon Blackwood's "The Willows" stands at the top of the list of the "best" in weird stories which Lovecraft submitted to B. K. Hart, the *Providence Journal* columnist.

WILLIAM H. D. BENCE.

141-19 228th St.,
Laurelton, L. I.

P. S. I haven't mentioned anything about the mag., F.F.M., because I think it is perfect—everything that could be desired in fantastic fiction.

AUSTRALIA PROTESTS

I thought that Lawrence's cover for "Allan and the Ice-Gods" was the most beautiful you've had to date. Lawrence showed real artistry in his portrayal of the girl in the ice. Finlay's illustrations for the story were almost on a par with his previous ones, too. "Minimum Man" I enjoyed very much, "People of the Ruins" was a well-written example of a very much hackneyed plot.

Now, my main grievance! "Boomerang". The Bok illustration was delightful, more of him, please, if he can continue to work like that. But—the story! Ugh! Mr. Whitley has visited Sydney, I agree with him on that point. In fact, several friends of mine met him here. Doubtless he took good note of the geography of the city. I found his place names faultless. The idea of the story wasn't bad, in fact it was refreshing to find a fantasy author who realized that Australia existed. But the dialogue! Really! I had great difficulty translating most of it. Normal Australians speak like Americans or Englishmen—the same language, the only difference being variations in inflexion and accent.

What part of the world Mr. Whitley's speech came from I cannot imagine. Perhaps he thought he was correctly interpreting our speech—he was mistaken. It bore a vague resemblance to the debased form of cockney dialect as found in lower classes of detective literature—but no likeness to our speech. Very few Australians have ever heard of the quaint pseudo-Australian idioms which he so fondly used. We've learned about them from the Hollywood films, and a few cowpunchers from our vast out-back. The majority of Australians abhor them, and I can certainly not imagine any time, however far in the future when the average Australian would be likely to use them. If there is one thing calculated to annoy an

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Australian it is people writing in their idea of the vernacular of a country about which they know nothing at all. Still, I must admit, from my point of view, I found the story the most amusing you've published in a long time.

STIRLING MACOBOY.

25 Shellcove Road,
Neutral Bay, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia

SWAP OFFER

Would anyone who can supply any or all of the following items, which I need for my collection, please write to me, indicating what they would accept in exchange:—

Science and Invention, December 1927. April, May, July, 1928.

Argosy-All-Story Weekly, August 14 and September 4, 1920.

Weird Tales, August 1926, October 1933, January and August 1934.

The Moon Pool and *The Metal Monster* by A. Merritt (pocket editions).

Rex Stout Mystery Magazine No. 3.

Finlay Portfolio No. 2.

THOMAS G. L. COCKCROFT.

111 Owen St.,
Wellington South, New Zealand

ONE OF THE GIRLS SPEAKS

Just finished "The City of Wonder" and I can truly say it was swell. The only comment I have to offer is that it ended sadly. Being only a woman, I hated to see such a love as theirs was described end so tragically. But it was a swell story.

Artwork for said story was super but Finlay is always good; my favorite artist. I didn't care much for the cover—just didn't appeal to me.

"Day of the Deepies" was fair but the shorts always seem poor after reading the novel.

I like your long letter column and was glad to see you printed quite a few letters from us fem. Thanks! I hate to pick up a mag and discover with the usual shock that it's packed with letters from fellows. Maybe if you look real hard, you'll find one small lonely letter from a fem tucked a way back at the end of the column. I've been an ardent sf fan for six years, since I was 14 to be exact, and I hate to see the fellows have all the say-so in SF.

Since I've been married, I've dropped out of sf circles and lost contact with all my old pen pals. Therefore, I'd like to make new ones and join a club or two. I'd be glad to hear from all who write as I have lots of time to answer all letters.

Here's hoping my missive doesn't meet with a fiery death in the furnace.

FRANCES HUBACEK.

635 Schifferdecker Ave.,
Joplin, Missouri

SOME WORDS FROM RAINES

The October issue heralds a new trend in F.F.M., I hope. After an excruciating, protracted diet of typically dull, insipid, British yarns, i.e. "Minimum Man," "People of the Ruins," E. Charles Vivian's "The City of Wonder" was a positive relief, and a laudable one. Even though still British it is at least different. The best to date since "Allan and the Ice-Gods." Although "Minimum Man" may deserve praise from a literary standpoint (or does it?) its main idea is an effort to one's intellect, so called. The concept of two or three hundred barbarically inclined, narrowly prejudiced homuncular egomaniacs subjugating a whole world superior in technological development is—well, it strains the bounds of credulity to the utmost. Even a fantasist's. Not so long ago some one hundred and sixty millions of *normal*-sized egomaniacs tried that same old routine.

I have a pet peeve against most British authors. Starting with H. G. Wells, the chief instigator, they seem to use a story merely as a vehicle in which to express their own sociological, economic, and political views. Aside from Machen, Dunsany, Haggard, Wakefield, Blackwood, and two or three others, you can throw the rest down their antiquated drains.

The October cover was below par, but the Finlay interiors were very fine and show much improvement over some of his recent stuff. Some have been harping on V. F.'s unoriginality on certain illustrations of the recent past, but anyone who can capture the essence of elemental evil as he did on pages 21 and 87, is certainly original enough for me. Hannes Bok is a preferable addition to your staff of artists. His grotesque, oddly angled characters, and amorphous, harshly brooding landscapes add a bizarre touch well in keeping with the atmosphere of a fantasy magazine. Though I think he's being misused on the pseudoscientifiction which you've been featuring in the short story department. He should be doing "true" fantasy.

Nowadays the fad among F.F.M. readers seems to be that of suggesting types of stories to print in F.F.M. May I add my two shekels' worth? There are many types of fantasy which would be agreeably received by the majority. All the way from the Dunsanian never-never lands through the exotic, alien and noxious worlds of C. A. Smith and H. P. Lovecraft, the glittering adventure-fantasies of Merritt and Haggard, down to the pagan, malevolent entities of Machen and the darker morbid side of human existence—demonology, sorcery, psychological "borderland" themes—the latter as exemplified by Stevens' "Serapion." Note I merely point out these types as examples; I'm not suggesting the specific use of these authors' works. And how about some paganism, preferably Egyptian? Since Rohmer, Haggard, and Merritt, the goddess Isis, Ishtar to you Babylonians, has intrigued me greatly.

To all you scientification hounds—let's leave s-f out of F.F.M. Let the current purveyors of same take care of that. But if we must have s-f for cripes sake no "mutant" stories or "atomic-war-aftermaths"! Said purveyors are handling them, also—to an irritating degree.

It pains me deeply to see the extent to which inflation has ensconced its ominous tentacles even into the fantasy world. Mediocre blurbs are panned off at fantastic prices rivalling

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Homer originals. Unsuspecting neophytes grope their way blindly through a maelstrom of bids and counterbids. Owners have become cagier than the proverbial Scotsman. So to all you miserly Midases, you tentative tycoons, you bilious bibliophiles; I have copies of Merritt's and Bok's "The Fox Woman," Merritt's "The Drone Man," Chayim Blach's "The Golem." Just try and get them. Hah.

The editors of F.F.M. may sometimes be amazed, or shall we say amused, at the meticulousness with which their magazine is literally picked apart, dissected, vivisected, wholly and particularly, by its various readers and in consequence they are recipients of sundry suggestions, praise, comments, critical or otherwise. But as such they need no greater indication that F.F.M. is not merely just another mag among the ranks of entertainment "blurbs," but has risen to an estimable niche in the bibliophiles' category. As a parting reminder of that old refrain, when can we expect monthly publication, well, when can we? Keep up the poem department whenever space permits. The accompanying illustrations are a delightful addition, too.

With due respect,

TONY RAINES.

Lone Wolf, Okla.

"VIEWPOINTS" COMPLIMENTED

In glancing over the Readers' Viewpoint this last issue (Oct.), I noticed nearly *20 pages* of letters!! *That* is a *sure* sign that the fans really like F.F.M. A person can get a lot of information just in reading over these letters and noting the stories mentioned, criticisms, wants, and back issues to sell. *And the letters are not cut.* There is only one thing that could improve this set-up; a brief comment, by the Editor, on each letter.

I am sending you my subscription renewal, herewith, as I do not want to miss an issue. Why don't you fans buy *two* of each issue? You'll be doing some fan a favor in the near future. Use that second copy for trading. It will be in mint condition, also. As it is, very few old issues are available and then at a high price.

If anyone is interested in a Finlay Folio or "The Sign of the Burning Hart" by Col. D. H. Keller, just drop me a card. I notice that many N.F.F.F. members write letters to Readers' Viewpoint. Keep it up, N3F-ers.

K. MARTIN CARLSON.

1028 3rd Ave. So.,
Moorhead, Minn.

NEW WASHINGTON CLUB

In the past I have noticed that this magazine has given a helping hand to fan activities and people collecting and trading SF mags and books.

And I would like to announce that several of us in this area have gotten together and have founded the Washington Science Fiction Society. Which will be devoted to the interest of Science Fiction Phantasy, and related subjects. We have had a couple of informal meetings and we hope to have our meetings every other week. That is the general plan so far, and there are other details that we have yet not decided on as we have just started.

So if any reader in Washington and vicinity would be interested, please get in contact with Frank Kerkhof, 1705 Q St., N.W., Washington, D. C.

PFC. RUSSELL SWANSON, 11147855.
Special Service Office,
South Post Ft. Myer, Va.

LIKES "MASTERS OF FANTASY"

I suppose I am a member of that group of fantasy fans and readers who always start out their letters to you by saying that this is the first time they have ever written to you but have had long acquaintance with F.F.M. So there!

Your recently established "Masters of Fantasy" series receives my highest approval and appreciation. The October M. of F. featuring Merritt interested me very much because I am an extremely ardent Merritt fan. My only criticism and regret is that you did not include a complete list of his works—both novels and shorts—with it. I really mean this because I am very interested in finding them out. I hereby say that some fantasy collector of Merritt would earn my eternal gratitude by sending me as complete a list as possible.

The cover by Lawrence illustrating the "City of Wonder" was good and worthy of praise but I have seen better. In some aspects it was a very pleasant change from some horror covers that you have had.

I refer in particular to a certain cover for April '46 which was illustrated with clutching hands of bone. Fantasy may include a great deal of horror but I think there are more who like covers of beautiful fantasy.

Vivian's "City of Wonder" attracted my attention because of the great similarity of it to Haggard's "Allan Quatermain" in general. A few instances: a lost pastoral people, the large amounts of gold, the civil war, and the extreme resemblance between Watkins and Allan Quatermain both in form and personality. In some places it was extremely well written, and it was illustrated to perfection by Finlay.

In closing may I say your "Readers' Viewpoint" is the best in the field?

RICHARD BASILEUS.

627 33rd Ave.,
Seattle 22, Wash.

WANTS NEW FINLAY PORTFOLIO

Quite some time has passed since you gave us a Finlay portfolio. Surely you cannot help noticing the remarkable work he is continually turning out. Almost all of it is meritorious enough to appear in a folio, and yet how much of it has appeared? I'll tell you: None, absolutely none.

Why not get out your dusty files and take a look at some of the illustrations which are lying

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in dim obscurity? It is time you chose about sixteen or twenty-four pictures for a portfolio and put same within the reach of your customers. And do not let pictures' requirement extend only to full-page drawing; some of the half-page and double-page work is good also.

CORDELL MAHANEY.

1252 Magazine St.,
Vallejo, Calif.

J. J. STAMP'S PRIVATE POLL

My vote by mail program proved definitely successful, and herewith are the results of same. The poll as you will remember was "what do you consider is the best story to appear in F.F.M. since Feb. 1946?" I was amazed at the number of letters received. Exactly 215. And here is how the voting went:

"Undying Monster," 67; "People of the Ruins," 52; "The Star Rover," 40; "Allan and the Ice-Gods," 21; "Twenty-fifth Hour," 14; "Island of Capt. Sparrow," 8; "The Island of Dr. Moreau," 7; "Minimum Man," 4; "Unthinkable," 1; "Before the Dawn," 1. Total 215.

"People of the Ruins" gave "The Undying Monster" a close chase until the latter part of the poll, then J. K.'s story pulled into the lead to stay. My own choice, "The Twenty-fifth Hour," came a bad fifth, the two island stories were almost equally popular, Sparrow gaining the decision; "Minimum Man" proved disappointing, and the least said about "Unthinkable" and "Before the Dawn" the better, although I believe "Unthinkable" should deserve a higher rating.

"The Willows" was considered the best short, by a number of the fans. Enough said about the poll. Have just finished the Oct. issue and again we have a sad conclusion to the story. How about a happy ending for a change? "City of Wonder" was fair, and the short story proved satisfying.

Ray Milland looked good on the cover. Where did Lawrence get his inspiration, from "The Lost Weekend"? Just remove the helmet from the head and in place of the pistol place a short beer—what have you?—Ray in one of his great scenes. Before I sign off, I thought you might like to know that more letters came from the State of New York than any of the other 47, hence the Fantasy State. Still need lots of F.F.M.s prior to Dec. '45.

J. J. STAMP.

Norval, Ontario, Canada.

A BIG "THANK YOU"!

A great big "thank you" for the wonderfully long October Readers' Viewpoint. I enjoy this part of your mag tremendously and, although it has always been very good, we have never had a treat like this before. I hope this continues because the longer it is, the better as far as this fan is concerned. I wish, though, that you would insert more personal comments or at least answer all direct questions if possible.

I give first place to Ernest S. Dale, second to Jack Clements and third a tie between Garvin Berry, my old pen-pal, and Russ Manning. Since there were so many letters this time it was very hard to choose, but them's my favorites.

Now for some comments on individual letters:

James W. Ayers: Although I don't think "People of the Ruins" was the best since "25th Hour", I liked your comments about the story tremendously I notice you liked "Island of Captain Sparrow" . . . I can't see why . . . I love story-ratings and, since mine is naturally different from yours, here's my equivalent to your list. Instead of a 1, 2, 3 rating, I'll divide them into classes. Class A is tops, B next, so on . . .

Class A: "Before the Dawn," John Taine; "The Twenty-Fifth Hour," Herbert Best; "Prisoner in Time," V. E. Thiessen; "The People of the Ruins," Edward Shanks; "Boomerang," George Whitley.

Class B: "The House of the Secret," Claude Farrère; "Allan and the Ice-Gods," H. Rider Haggard; "Minimum Man," Andrew Marvell.

Class C: "The Island of Dr. Moreau," H. G. Wells.

There they are, the lists within each class are in order of appearance. Yes, it *will* be a long time before "The Twenty-Fifth Hour" will meet its superior, a very long time. In regard to "The Undying Monster," I don't go for this kind, either. Count me in on that monthly deal, too.

J. J. Stamp: Another nice tribute to "The People of the Ruins," but in my opinion it is not a fantasy but, as Jack Clements points out, a stf tale. Nice thoughtful paragraph about the future, J.J., but *does* everything now point to a rosy future? I agree wholeheartedly on the tremendous effect the tragic ending had on the reader . . . I'll never forget that Lawrence pic that sums it all up so magnificently on P. 65. Benson's "Caterpillars" didn't move me to horror or anything else and neither did its Lawrence pic. What an observant fan is Stamp—I checked up and he is right about P. 87 being a repository for great art. It occurs on that page in Feb. 46, Feb. 47, June 47 and Aug. 47—all by Lawrence and all magnificent. There have been no poor pics on that page and at least four superb ones! Well, the Andrew Marvell story didn't exactly turn out marvellous, but it was pretty good.

Milton Papayianis: This is a very interesting letter to me, because its author is just as fanatical about fantasy as I am about stf. If I may, I would like to answer some of his questions. To start with a definition of stf and fantasy is needed. Here's mine: stf is fiction based on science, that means *any* science. It has a broad field and many variations, but the dominant idea is one of natural explanation. No matter how weird or out of this world the stf story may become, it is always shown to be based on natural phenomenon, even if the explanation is not expressly stated and even if the descriptions in the story are utterly alien. In short, to be science fiction a story must be *possible*. The readers of stf became readers because they had elastic minds which could accept the possibility of countless ideas which another type

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of person would scoff at or not understand or both. Not necessarily probable, but possible —that's stf to me.

R. R. ANGER.

520 Highland Ave.,
Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

POEMS WELCOME IN F.F.M

As a long-time follower of F.F.M., there are a few observations that I would like to make on the October issue, along with some comments on the magazine in general. I hope I won't sound too critical, but it seems evident that the mag is not all that it once was. The very presence of discord in the formerly 100%-rave letters column should serve to indicate this.

I managed to get all the way through Vivian's "The City of Wonder," which automatically places it several notches above "Unthinkable," "Minimum Man," "The People of the Ruins," etc., etc. It struck me as a fairly well-done tale, and how well the fans like it will depend upon whether or not they're fed up with lost-race stories. I am.

Two items before we leave the fa-a-abulous city: (a) Vivian's mutterings about souls wandering about and "blending" with the Piltdown Man—who was considerably more than an animal, Mr. Vivian to the contrary—are enough to make an anthropologist contemplate Lovecraftian vengeance, and (b) how about finding another name besides Eve for the heroines? Call her Venus or Looanna or *Hey, you!* or something. Anything.

Leinster's "Day of the Deepies" was likewise a good treatment of a theme that has been done to death. It was not as good a short story as "The City of Wonder" was a novel, to make a very odious comparison.

All is not yet lost, however. Both poems, and Flynn's "Death" in particular, were fine; considerably above the average, in magazines or elsewhere. Neil Austin's sketch on Merritt was a tasteful tribute, as was his work on Lovecraft last issue. I don't care for Napoli, but Finlay and Bok were splendid on the interiors. Finlay is still the king of fantasy artists; considering the stories he's illustrated lately, his pix are as good as ever. Lawrence's cover is not up to his best, but it's not bad by any means.

As I have said before (which goes to show how much good it does), your trouble seems to be that you are publishing fantastic stories instead of fantasy. There is a difference, of course. Fantasy is a mood, a style, a method of expression, and is quite distinct from *plot* as such. For instance, this current novel, handled differently, would have made a good fantasy; it had good possibilities in Nantia *et al.* Many of Merritt's brilliant works fall into the lost-race category, but such is his spell that you have to think twice to realize the fact.

Enuf of that. I am sure that you know what fantasy is at least as much as I do. Perhaps you have decided to stick to the lost-race, end-of-the-world, and back-to-the-ape type of story. Okay—but get the good ones. Haggard wrote good adventure stories. Vardis Fisher wrote some literate, thoughtful pre-historics. (His "Darkness and the Deep" starts with a prologue that is truly beautiful writing.) There are several thousand novels about The End, all of which are better than things like "People of the Ruins."

In the happy event that you are looking for some material worthy of the old F.F.M., I suggest Lovecraft's "Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath," never before in a magazine, Merritt's "The Fox Woman," well-completed by Hannes Bok, anything by Olaf Stapledon, any of Algernon Blackwood's weird novels, and some good science fiction to break the monotony. Even vampires and werewolves would look fresh and original now.

On the shorts, I like Bradbury and C. L. Moore for the new material (who doesn't?), and Ambrose Bierce for the traditional. H. G. Wells wrote some good weird shorts—far, far better than his novels, it seems to me.

The Reader's Viewpoint is as good as ever, for which praise unto Ghu.

I hope all the above criticism will be of some use; I write in the fond hope of a coming Renaissance. Maybe one of those remaining Taines would start it off. . . .

CHAD OLIVER.

c/o Mrs. Allen Baker,
Kerrville, Texas

LEINSTER STORY VERY GOOD

The October issue of F.F.M. was quite successful as far as this reader is concerned. E. Charles Vivian's exciting yarn, "The City of Wonder" was reminiscent of Haggard, which is good indeed.

The cover for this tale did not seem particularly effective at first glance but a closer study proved it to be one of the better covers produced for the more recent issues. The spirit of the Vivian story was portrayed very remarkably by Lawrence's painting. In fact, it is regrettable that the same artist did not do the inside illustrations for the story. However, Finlay's illustrations were good with exception of the double-page title spread which was much too mundane for him to portray in his usual style. The illustrations as a whole, this issue, looked more like the work he used to do before he went in the Army.

It is really nice to see Bok's illustrations once more gracing the pages of our favorite mag. His work is actually more distinctive than that of Finlay or Lawrence.

Second on the October bill of fare was Murray Leinster's "The Day of the Deepies." This story was really very good, but if your editorial policy includes publishing science-fiction shorts, why not publish an occasional science-fiction novel such as Munsey Publications did? Since science-fiction in books is very limited, perhaps you could obtain the services of one of the top stf writers such as E. E. Smith and have him write an original novel.

The "Masters of Fantasy" page rates an extremely close third to the two stories. By all means, definitely include this in all forthcoming issues. It is, in my estimation, one of

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the very best features of any fantasy or stf mag. Mr. Austin's drawings and script for both the Lovecraft and Merritt appreciations showed a genuine knowledge of their works.

DON HUTCHISON.

7 Tacoma Ave.,
Toronto 5, Ontario,
Canada.

SUGGESTIONS

Congratulations! "The City of Wonder" was as superior to "Minimum Man" as the latter was to the June novel. If the quality of the stories keeps increasing at this rate, we'll soon have a magazine equal to the much discussed "old" F.F.M. In my opinion, "The City of Wonder" is the best novel since "The Undying Monster." (I'll probably start a controversy with this statement, but I consider "Allan and the Ice-Gods" one of Haggard's few mediocre works, and "The Star Rover" rather weak on plot. There, I've said it, and I'm glad!).

I have one complaint. It's in regard to the blurbs for Vivian's story. From them, I inferred that "The City of Wonder" was a weird novel, or, at least, a great deal more fantastic than it proved to be. I suggest that whoever composes them read the story first. The cover was rather unimaginative. With all the possibilities the story offered, it seems to me Lawrence made a very poor choice. The inside illustrations weren't up to F.F.M.'s usual standards, but you still have the best illustrations in the fantasy field.

My suggestion for publishing in F.F.M. is "Ayesha; the Return of She". I agree with some other correspondents of yours that "She" is too easily obtainable (I discovered three different editions in one day's search). It seems to me that you should publish this story as soon as possible. There has been a greater demand for it than any other story, excepting "Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath", which I also nominate for early publication.

I think you are doing a great service to fandom by allowing readers to publish their trade lists in the readers' column. Of course, I wouldn't want you to think I'm just saying that so you'll print *my* wants. Haha. Heaven forfend (??). I wouldn't *dream* of mentioning that I'd like to trade copies of "Dracula" (mint, jkt), "Frankenstein" (almost mint), "In the Midst of Life" (tales by Bierce, mint, jkt.) "The Beast with Five Fingers" (20 tales by Harvey near mint, jkt.) or "She" (1890 Caxton Edition, fine), for early issues, if possible in excellent condition (must have cover intact), of *Science Wonder* or *Wonder Stories*.

Don't feel insulted because I don't want any F.F.M.s at present. I'll get around to them, eventually.

I have a request for some information. As long as I've been an stfantast (all of a year and a half, now), I've been under the impression that F.F.M. appeared in 1939. Now, looking through the letters to the editor, I find a fan who professes to have been a loyal reader of FFM since 1936!

Suggestion Department:

1) Trim the edges of F.F.M. This sounds like a silly request, but it's much easier to preserve, intact, mags whose edges are even. Also please cut the cover down to the size of the pages.

2) If you can't go monthly, at least try to give us, as one fan suggested, a quarterly (in addition to the regular bi-monthly) featuring one author's work every time. This, in fact, would even be preferable to a monthly F.F.M.

3) When that excellent series, Masters of Fantasy is completed, reprint all the pix on glossy paper and issue them in portfolio form. Thus, every fan can have his gallery of famous authors. This would be especially nice as a decoration for fantasy club rooms.

In closing, let me congratulate you on the recent gigantic letter section. I imagine it's the biggest ever to appear in any prozine. Keep up the good work!

Anticipatorally (whew!) yours,

DAN MULCAHY.

4170 Utah St.,
St. Louis 16, Mo.

P.S. If anyone would like to trade the above-mentioned mags for one copy of *Amazing Stories Annual*, in excellent condition but no cover, let me know. Just drop a card with your bid.

Thanks, D.M.

ABOUT "UNTHINKABLE"

Your leading novels are invariably well selected. It is otherwise with your shorts—especially those dealing with spectral spiders and caterpillars!

Frankly, I am amazed that "Unthinkable" did not ring the bell with your readers. Of course the ruined world theme of it has been overplayed in F.F.M. Still, the treatment in "Unthinkable" was epic and original. The dramatic suddenness of the catastrophe in the midst of unloading the supplies, the "unthinkable" change in the prospects of the expedition, the immediate decision of Rattray to prepare for the worst, while hoping for the best (which is true genius, and real optimism) the superhuman efforts, essentially successful, to make the derelict's engines serviceable, and finally the nobel conviction of a call by destiny, and the resultant girding up of loins to the task of rebuilding the world—all these in my opinion make "Unthinkable" one of the best stories ever written.

It is of course a fact that there are British citizens like me who have read American magazines since their tender youth, who can read American stories with all the understanding of the American-born, but in the very nature of things there are not many Americans who can enter into the spirit of a British yarn. I bespeak, on the part of American readers, and I do it humbly and respectfully, a re-examination of "Unthinkable" in the light of my remarks, and I am sure the revised verdict will be favorable. "People of the Ruins" did not satisfy me. The hero lacked the will to measure up to his opportunities. Certainly the author showed courage and originality in killing off his hero and the latter's bride. Such ruthlessness is indeed rare. London's "Star Rover" is superb. Nuff sed.

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"The City of Wonder" was good enough, but why kill off such a charming girl? "Before the Dawn" and "Allan and the Ice-Gods" suited me fine. Strange to say, I can't remember "The 25th Hour," yet it might have been one I rated highly. I usually pass my mags (and they are legion) on to somebody else. I wish you would reprint "The Spot of Life." F.F.M. and its companion became unobtainable here just about the time you printed the S. of L.

Congratulations and best wishes.

THOS. H. CASIDY.

Horen, Alberta, Canada.

FOR READERS 16 TO 17

I have read only two issues of your excellent magazine. But from now on I'm going to read them all. Here are some of the reasons that I am making *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* one of my favorite magazines.

1. Good stories by famous authors.
2. Excellent illustrations and a lot of them.
3. Most important of all (in my opinion), you have a really swell readers' page. More readers get their letters published than in any other magazine that I know of.

Your last feature, "The City of Wonder" was one swell story. Vivian's style is much like Haggard's (I have read "King Solomon's Mines"). I enjoyed reading some of the poems you printed. Keep it up.

My main purpose in writing this letter is to start a correspondence with someone who really likes science-fiction and who is 16 or 17 years of age. I know of no one in my vicinity who is my age and *really* likes to read it.

BOB STRICKLER.

6719 Chestnut Ave.,
Kansas City 5, Missouri.

"DEEPIES" SWELL

See what I mean? Ha! You wouldn't pay any attention to your fans, but went right ahead and published another one of those "world in the dumps" things (I refer to "People of the Ruins.") And now practically every letter in your Oct. ish which does not praise you to the heavens, states, suhs, that you have gone far enough. I don't suppose it would have mattered so much if your stories had appealed more to we fantastics, but they seemed to grow progressively worse, with "People of the Ruins" hitting bottom, rock bottom. Such a dull, insipid tale never did I expect to see between your covers. However, I suppose you're getting tired of letters trying to beat the fact of your folly into your head, so I'll ease off—and anyway I notice that your last two "Minimum Man" and "City of Wonder" are of a different and better type.

It's a good thing you haven't gone monthly, because with your seeming mania for sticking to one type of story till you have run it into the ground, we'd get so sick and tired of the same thing month after month that we might—or something equally drastic.

I know, I know. I don't have to buy your old mag. But if I didn't, how would I get to read those wonderful Murray Leinster stories with Bok illustrations? "Day of the Deepies" is the best short you've run since "Daemon." And classing it with "Daemon" means that it's right up there crowding "The Willows" and "Wendigo." And Hannes Bok! Now I see why your old fans were so anxious to have him back. What a wonderful artist! More more and more from both, please.

By the way, since we're on the subject of pics, Finlay's pencil drawing (if pencil it was) in "The City of Wonder," Page 55, had a wonderfully distinct atmosphere of its own. Better than his pen and inks, I believe. More, please.

I find it hard to make up my mind about "The City of Wonder." Everything was going well until that vampire bat got in. For Pete's sakes. Blood sucking by Vampire Bats, yet. That sort of stuff went out with "Frankenstein" and "Dracula." It was actually hard for me to read on, and only the death of Eve regained my interest. Vivian's writing actually became powerful then, and continued to be so until the very end. Perhaps some day I'll mentally bypass the vampire episode while I'm rereading the story, and by so doing, get the true worth and thrill from the tale. Perhaps.

As great as the hue and cry about World's Finis stories, has been the request for some truly off trail tales. Who cares if it should contain some necessary stfiction? Most good fantasy set on some other planet would be wonderful. And you have to admit it would be a change. Get Taine to do it, if he hasn't already. He couldn't do a bad one if he tried.

I want to thank all of the fans who have written to me, both those who wrote to help me in my collecting and those who wrote just to be writing. I promise to answer every letter I receive. Debtors excepted.

Congrats on your lengthened letter department. It's really a help to those of us who are trying to let others know of our collecting desires.

RUSS MANNING.

Box 1746,
Orcutt, Calif.

MESSAGE FROM BEYOND?

Just finished reading the October issue of F.F.M. For once I liked the long story, "The City of Wonder." It was good. Including the love. I also liked "The Day of the Deepies." Ask Don Wilson if he's a dero. What's wrong with "The 25th Hour"? I liked it.

GRAVEYARD JONES.

2nd Grave from the left of the gate.

OCT. ISSUE A HONEY

The Oct. issue of F.F.M. was again a honey. Lawrence's cover was next best but no comparison to Finlay.

The story was beautifully written. I particularly liked the part of the journey to the City. In fact the whole story sort of had me spellbound. It was one of the few that I have read in a whole evening.

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JACK ROBERTS.

69 Erie St.,
Tiffin, Ohio.

ART WORK SUPERB

This is my 1st letter to F.F.M. although I have read every issue and have a complete file.

I do consider F.F.M. the best magazine in its field but do have just a few criticisms:

1. Why not monthly publication?
2. Why not trimmed edges? Everybody wants them.
3. Why not ever print a story that previously appeared in a magazine? Why thus eliminate the use of authors such as Burroughs, Merritt, Lovecraft, Kline? Also other Munsey authors?
4. Why not re-issue favorite novels with the suggestion made by my friend Vernell Coriell in the Oct. 1947 issue of devoting each number to one author exclusively?
5. Why this rash of English authors and poor stories lately? Such as "Minimum Man," "People of the Ruins," "Unthinkable," "Twenty-Fifth Hour," etc.?
6. Why not briefly answer each reader's pleading questions such as mine in the Readers' Viewpoint?

Enough of criticisms, and now for some bouquets:

1. The two Haggard books recently printed really revived interest in the master of them all. The more of his works you can use, the better. I say this although I have practically a complete collection of his books.
2. Your art work is superb.
3. One can really obtain almost any book he needs through your Readers' Viewpoint section. I have obtained many prized books thusly.

Also, I have several Haggard books I'd like to dispose of in this manner, "When the World Shook," "Queen of Sheba's Ring," "King Solomon's Mines."

I also have a few other books to trade or otherwise dispose of.

Well, I think that should cover everything. I'm always willing to correspond with real fantasy fans, especially Haggard, Lovecraft, Merritt or Burroughs fans.

MARVIN B. WOLF, M. D.
7324 W. Berwyn Ave.,
Chicago 31, Ill.

Editor's Note: There is not room in these columns to answer all the readers' questions. We try as much as possible to answer these by letters to the individual. Also many of these questions have been answered in Viewpoints before.

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THE READERS' VIEWPOINT
THANKING THE AUTHOR

Though I have been reading F.F.M. for years I have never thought of writing. The two stories in your Oct. issue are swell. I enjoyed "The City of Wonder" very much. I think it was the Sept. issue of F.F.M. that had "Minimum Man." I enjoyed that very much also. Some of my friends and my folks think I'm nuts for reading F.F.M. and other science-fiction mags, but that is the kind of stuff I like to read. Thanks to E. Charles Vivian for the swell story. Keep up the good work. Your mag is tops with me.

EDMUND TRENYEA.

Gen. Del.,
Ukiak, Calif.

SWAPPING?

I have nine issues of *Startling Stories* from Fall '45 to July '47 inclusive with the exception of Vol. 13. No. 2.; also eleven issues of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* from Summer '45 to Aug. '47 inclusive and complete, all of which I am willing to trade for the two issues of F.F.M. containing "The Undying Monster" and "Creep, Shadow" and any issues (one or more, makes no difference) of *Planet Stories* before Winter '46.

All of said magazines are in very good condition; and except for a few check marks which I have sprinkled here and there on titles of stories which appealed to me, they are practically perfect. Yours truly would also welcome a little Science-Fiction or Fantasy fan companionship since I honestly believe I'm the only fellow around here who's ever even heard of fantasy.

BOB BOYER.

243 Rowe St.,
Tamaqua, Pa.

THANKS FOR "STAR ROVER"

This is the first time I've written to you so it's with apologies for not sending my thanks sooner. I am now an avid reader of fantasy and F.F.M. is the cause of my present taste in literature.

A. Merritt is my favorite and anything by him is for me. I believe I've read most of his stuff but I'm still looking for the "Snake Mother".

Second to Merritt, in my opinion, is H. Rider Haggard and I'm waiting patiently for you to print the rest of the "Allan" stories.

I always read the Readers' Viewpoint and let me add my congrates for your selection of London's "Star Rover". It was a great story and coming from the pen of one of our "greats" in American Literature made it only that much more appealing.

In answer to some of your fans, I have a few "dated" issued of F.F.M. for disposal. They are Vol. 4, no. 3—"Polaris of the Snowes"; Vol. 4, no. 5—Cumming's "The Brand New World";

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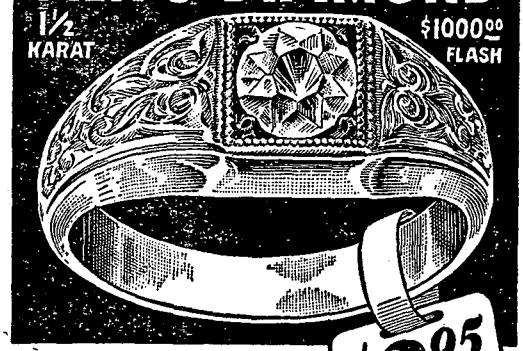

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LIKES LEINSTER AND WHITLEY

For a while I thought that F.F.M. was coming out of the dark corners, when you published two excellent novels, "The Star Rover" and "Allan and the Ice-Gods."

Well, despite that and the optimistic views put in by the fans, I still regard F.F.M. as slipping badly and possibly slipping fast. About half of the novels published during 1946 and the last three after Haggard's novel should belong to adventure story magazines, and none of them appeals to me at all.

True, there is a note of improvement in the last two issues, Aug. and Oct., "Boomerang" and "The Day of the Deepies" and best of all, Hannes Bok's illustrations. Bok is my favorite artist.

For the back issues collectors and readers: I have quite a large collection of science fiction of all kinds to dispose of, especially *Wonder, Amazing* and *Astoundings* as far back as 1935 or 30. Some Arkham house books and Aven's A. Merritt pocketbooks.

GORDON RIX.
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A BOK PORTFOLIO!

I should like to announce the publication of *A Portfolio of Drawings by Hannes Bok.* This artfolio, to be brought out by Utopia Publications, will contain ten drawings by Hannes Bok. Most of these will be previously unpublished works, done on private commission, or strictly for the pure love of creation—with no thought toward publication in magazines or books. Among the published work will be the best of *Bokiana*: The "Hidden Faces" illustration for Robert W. Chambers' "The Yellow Sign" (which appeared in FFM), plus many other famous pictures from various fantasy and science fiction magazines. There will also be a reproduction of the full-color painting Mr. Bok did on commission for the noted California artist R. A. Hoffman, which has been seen only by Mr. Hoffman's local set of friends.

The Bok portfolio will consist of a rough cover, with the reproductions lithographed from the originals on the finest grade of paper available. Also, the prints will be unstapled, so as to be ideally suitable for framing. *Publication date will depend on how soon sufficient advance cash orders justify.* The price for the portfolio is $1.50.

Those interested in receiving a copy of the Bok portfolio are advised to contact the publisher immediately, in order to reserve a copy. Few will be published.

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